HARVEST FESTIVAL
OF
BUDDHIST DARDS OF LADAKH
AND
OTHER ESSAYS

Harvest Festival of Buddhist Dards of Ladakh and Other Essays

By

E. JOLDAN

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PREFACE

As you will find out, it is not a book in the proper sense ; only a collection of essays under one cover. In the Preface I have to say something as to how I came to write my book. If my friends and well-wishers think that I have written some thing scholarly they would be disappointed. I am not a knowledgeable person even about any one aspect of Ladakh. I have no pretentions about being a researcher or anything like that. As you will see, my writings pertain to what I read, saw and heard, mostly about an era which is over. I would not call them 'good old days' because conditions are vastly better now. It is the age, boyhood or early youth that gives them the rain-bow colours. But certainly, some memories I still happily cherish.

I do not think anybody has yet written about the Harvest Festival of the Dards of Ladakh. The area is still out of bounds for foreign tourists. I went there twice in 1981 and found their customs and the Festival very interesting. That was a reason good enough to write

I greatly admired Baba Kalam and when I found his notes, writing about his story was irresistible. This naturally led me to write about the Central Asian Trade which affected the lives of Ladakhis in many ways for more than half a century. As my father was associated with it and I know and remember quite a few things about it ; and the interviews this year, revealed several things which I did not know.

Ladakh is very much on the Tourist Map these days and I felt I should express my views in this regard which are of course personal.

I retired from Government service in 1971 and from running the Joldan Guest House since 1983. So, I had plenty of leisure to think, to recollect, to search old letters and stray notes, to write and re-write. These things kept me busy for more than

a year, but sometimes it was exhausting, and several times I thought of giving it up. Somehow I finished it and now there is no retreat. I know I have to face the music—the good and the bad Others may say what they like, I have, at least the consolation that whatever I wrote about Ladakh was done with 'feeling'.

I am conscious of the grammatical mistakes, and lack of what may be called "Book Etiquette", and other niceties of writing. Many words should have been in Italics but I have written all such words with a capital letter. Also, there have been some digressions. I have written some of the Urdu and Ladakhi words not as they have been done in other books but as I have heard them pronounced, for instance Turkistan and not Turkestan, Rotang and not Rothang.

And as regard writing Ladakhi words grammatically correct, in English, I am sorry for having to say that my knowledge of Bodhi Language is awfully poor and besides it would be a bit confusing for those who are not conversant with Bodhi Spelling and pronunciation. To illustrate—aBu d Mar (red worm) are pronounced as Bu Mar, both the small a and d being silent. Therefore, I have spared my readers getting a little confused and myself the difficult task of finding the correct Bodhi spellings of the words. I have written them phonotically.

I have used brackets at many places, mostly to avoid Foot notes.

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I have to thank those whom I interviewed in Srinagar and Leh for telling me what they knew about the things I wanted; To Mr. Jawahar Lal Saraf, my friend and colleague in Leh for coming to the Flat in Srinagar to type, on holidays and after school hours, bringing his own typewriter. Without his ungrudging help progress of my work would have been very slow and difficult; to Mr. Raja Ram Kapoor for helping me to get the book published, to Mr. Abdul Ghani Sheikh for lending the Notes and the photograph of Baba Kalam, and for several information; to Sonam Phunthsog for accompanying me twice to Brokyul; and lastly, to my dear youngest daughter, Tadzin, for encouraging to write and helping me at every stage. Without her help publication of this book would not have been possible.

Srinagar,
October 8, 1984

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CONTENTS

COVER PICTURE : A YOUNG DARD LADY

1

Grand Harvest Festival (Chopo Srupla) of The Buddhist Dards of Ladakh

When in January 1981, my friend Sonam Phunthsog invited me to Achina thang (the last Buddhist village before reaching the land of the Dards of Ladakh) and promised to accompany me to Brok-land. I was delighted, for to visit it, was a long cherished desire. We purchased some food articles, and a dozen packets of biscuits and the same number of Khataks (white scarf) as presents and left for Achina Thang on January 5, 1981, by the weekly truck. There we had to wait for 6 days for the second truck to carry us to Bema, the last stop for vehicular traffic.

It was about 9 p.m. on January 12, when we arrived at Chamakpa's house. He was an acquaintance of Sonam Phuntsog. (Henceforth I will write only his initials—S.P.). Two uninvited guests at 9 O' clock, on a winter night was a matter of inconvenience for anybody and I could sense it, but presentation of the biscuit packet and the scarf warmed up our host and hostess and the former brought half a bottle of wine which he said was made from his own brown grapes. Before entering the house we saw in the moonlight, a big vine, twisting round a poplar tree and the branches climbing to the roof-top.

After a hastily cooked meal, all went to bed in the big kitchen. The big thick goat hair blankets over our sleeping-bags, lent by our host, kept us warm.

Next morning we had to go to the upper-floor kitchen to prepare our omelette and sweet tea with tinned cow milk for both eggs and cow milk are strictly prohibited in the main

kitchen. When questioned, the Brokpas would simply say that both things are offensive to their gods (LHAS). Consequently, the Brokpas do not keep cows and fowls. Cow milk and its other products are anathema for them particularly, to the women folk. At Da, the next day, the Grand-ma of the house, (We always address a person as Grand-ma, Grand-pa, Uncle, Aunty, Nono Nomo—Younger brother, younger sister, etc. according to age) pointed towards the Kagani Mane, about 3 kilometers to the west where she said their men folk, in olden days, when they went to Kargil or Skardo on business, would finish eating anything they brought pertaining to cow milk products such as butter, before entering the village. The only animal they would tolerate of the cow's species is the ZO (Cross between cow and YAK). This animal is indispensable for ploughing their fields, and reluctantly they have to feed and keep them in their animal-shed, but when sowing and ploughing seasons are over (they reap two harvests in a year) they are driven to the higher mountains. Behind their house I found heaps of ZO dung. They would not defile their hands and crops with the manure. So it was lying unused. In Garkon, I tried in vain to argue about the usefulness of the cow. They simply repeated that it is highly offensive to their gods. They consider the goat a better substitute. For a Brokpa the goat is Nor or wealth and they would reckon the riches of a family by the number of goats and sheep it has, and I was told that a good number of them possess several hundred each. They keep most of them in the pastures up in the mountains.

In my opinion, the main reason for forbidding cows, is the geography of the area. Beyond Da, to the west, the Indus gorge gets narrower and the mountains on both sides steeper and higher. At several places in Da, the width of the village in hardly more than that of a football field. S.P told me that some mountains are so steep and dangerous that during that summer, two ZOS while grazing, fell down a precipice and were killed. As the Brokpas would have nothing to do with the cow's species, they sent messengers to Achina Thang, and they got fine beef and strong hide at cheap rates. Also a

man carrying a load of fire-wood slipped down another mountain and died. Both these things happened during summer, 1981. Such terrian is not good for the clumsy cow and besides, feeding them in winter would be a problem. Therefore, the wise Brokpa Elders in olden times, associated it, with the hatred of the gods which alone could be a totally effective ban. On the other hand, the sure-footed goat could go to feed itself anywhere in the mountains. However, now things are changing and the men while on business outside Brokland, do not mind taking cow-butter and milk for they cannot help it, and I am told that some families in Hanu have started keeping cows.

I think, Dards in Baltistan, Gilgit and Kalash also, mostly keep goats and sheep. In the article by Debra Denker, National Geographic, Oct. 1980, a picture shows a Kalash Dard feeding goats on a roof-top.

Next day, half way to Da, we were overtaken by a young Lama, one of the only two Dard Lamas (the other is from Hanu). S.P calls him the 'Tourist Lama'. With his fair complexion, blue eyes and brown hair, indeed he looks like a European. He, himself told S.P. the story. Two years back when he went to the water-tap in Leh, with a bucket, some of the Ladakhi ladies in the queue, talking in Ladakhi, mistook him to be a European tourist Lama, and gave him priority. Supressing a smile, he filled his bucket and left.

He said that he was going to Da for the Losar (New Year) gathering that evening. We were happy at the prospect of witnessing some sort of Dard function. Being one of the two main centres, people from Bema, Sanit, Larsang and other villages have to go to Da for important social functions, and of course, for the Grand Harvest Festival in Autumn, held there every two years.

Namgyal, who houses the Government Primary School, was our host at Da. The school being closed for winter holidays, we made ourselves comfortable in the main class-room with wooden floor and glass window-panes. We could not

have got a better and cleaner accommodation anywhere in Brokland. Another advantage was that we could cook anything without hurting the religious feelings of the family members.

On our inspection of the village after a late lunch, S.P showed me the place in the rock where the Lha stays for several days prior to the Festival. Further up in the village was the dancing-place, shaded by two big walnut trees. This is spacious compared to the one at Garkon. At the end of the village was the Gonpa (monastery) and ruins of the old fort and houses. The fort looked more like a Dogra than a Ladakhi structure.

When we went into the newly-built room adjacent to the Gonpa, people had already gathered and were drinking Chhang (local beer) arranged by the Konyer (resident-Lama-incharge of the Gonpa). There were no items of furniture except a few flat stones, on which the cups for the Chhang were placed. Putting my Khatak on a stone, we took our seats on the mud-floor. A young man brought two cups and poured Chhang which was good. Many of the seated men were elderly and solomn-looking, with long beards. Nobody spoke to us. After some time when we heard drum-beatings we went out to see what was happening.

Under the tower of the fort a man wes playing on a big bass drum with a small curved stick in his right hand and beating with his fingers and palm on the other side. It made a resounding sound. A small boy was blowing on the charcoal in a pottery-shred and the smoke from the dry Shukpa (pencil cedar) was spreading a pleasant scent around. Music and burning of the incense, both were done in honour of the gods, what we call the Lharna, music for the gods. Shortly afterwards, a man carrying the carcase of a dressed small goat appeared from the ruins below. Evidently, blood of the sacrificial kid had been shed to appease the gods. Darkness was descending in the gorge and it all looked a bit mysterious like a story in a Fairy tale.

On the following day our host brought the Lapdrak (caretaker of the gods), one of the men who sings the Dard Hymnals during the Festival days in which they describe in detail, in their language, the migration of their ancestors from Gilgit. I had to ask them many questions about their culture and traditions but the most important was about the mass-kissing during the Grand Festival both at Da and Garkon.

Both the Lapdraks in Da and Garkon and others told us that when their ancestors migrated in the ancient past from Gilgit to Da-Drok (mountain pasture) their gods and goddesses accompained them. They were very fond of dancing. I was told that one can still see the bare circular dancing track, on the pasture at Mal-Mal-Khatu where the grass even now refuses to grow, as it were. So fond of dancing were the Brok-Lhas with humans that the latter's hunting and agricultural works suffered, and the Brokpas got rather tired of them. They could not refuse to dance, much less force them to leave the place. How could one offend the Lhas ? So, they hatched a plan and while dancing started kissing the gods and the goddesses indiscriminately. The Brok Lhas were shy in this respect, and did not like the kissing business at all, and told them they would be going away soon. The Brokpas, of course, were happy to hear that they were doing so of their own accord, and went to see them off a long way towards Ladakh. To comemorate the event of getting rid of the Lhas without being offensive, they kiss the girls during the Festival. I will describe the details, later on.

The Brokpas' belief that once their ancestors danced with the Lhas was also repeated by the commentator when a group of Brokpa men, women and musicians from Da were brought to Leh this year in August for the Festival of Ladakh.

Possibily, the Lhas constituted a higher sort of Caste, like the Brahmins, who looked after the religious affairs and did not intermarry with the commoners.

Namgyal told me that Mal-Mal-Khatu, up in the Da mountains is a beautiful spacious place with ruined loose-stone

huts and a cairn of wild sheep and goat trophies, near a lone pencil-cedar tree. With its semi-mythological and historical background, I think, it must be a charming place in summer.

Another interesting and I think, a unique tradition among the Brokpas is the celebration of Lo-Dron feast. They follow the Tibetan calendar of 12 years' cycle—each year named after an animal such as dog, hog, monkey, dragon etc. and like Ladakhis one calculates his or her age by remembering the name of the animal of the year of birth. Thus, when a man says he has completed two Lo-Skors it means he is 24 years old, but the Brokpas, particularly the ladies, on completing the cycle of 12 years celebrate the occasion in a big way by throwing a party to the whole village. Thus, everybody in the village knows all those persons who would be celebrating their Lo-Dron, in a particular year. It is of special importance for girls completing their first cycle because they would be entering puberty. During Losar celebrations, clad in their best, they are brought to the village dancing-floor in a procession.

Those who are fortunate to celebrate their 6th cycle are permitted to do it one year ahead, viz. after completing 71 years. I do not think, any other people such as the Chinese or the Tibetans who follow the 12-years calendar, celebrate the completion of a cycle as the Brokpas do.

We were fortunate to participate in such a celebration two days later, at Garkon.

Evidently, they initiated this tradition after their migration to Ladakh when they adopted the Tibetan Calendar.

Also, we were told at Da that on the eve of their Losar (New Year) they light torches made of pieces of wood tied round a stout stick and throw them at a particular place in village, just as we do in Leh. I wonder whether the Ladakhis got this tradition from the Brokpas ? Their ancestors in Gilgit did it and thereby hangs a beautiful but tragic love story (Lietner page 8). And may be, the Ladakhi custom of making wild sheep and goats from dough and decorating their kitchen

walls with crescent and other designs, at Losar, have their origins in Brokpa traditions. Tibetans don't do these things.

There is a wall painting in the Gon-Khang at Namgyal Tsemo, in Leh, depicting a Ladakhi king holding a court, and musicians playing on a bass drum. Evidently, the Ladakhi orchestra in those days included the Brokpa Dang-Dang (Bass drum).

Thirdly, the fashion among Ladakhi ladies of wearing goat skin having long white hair, to cover their back comes from Brok-land. During the Festival, I saw some ladies wearing them, with fine long hair round the edge, and covering their whole back. Till the mid 1950's almost every Ladakhi woman wore one. What a pity it is almost totally gone out of fashion in Leh these days.

There is a rich field for anthropologists to study about interaction of Ladakhi and Dard cultures. (But it is still out of bounds for foreigners).

Next morning we went to the old man who watched the course of the sun in the sky and pronounces when the winter solastice would take place, after this they celebrate their New year. This would be sometime in the third week of December which is not wide off the exact date –22 December. From the roof of his house he pointed to the cairn on the steep mountain, across the river Indus, in front of the village and said when the sun reaches that point it would 'return'. Similarly, the old man would announce their spring Equinox and the people would start agricultural activities. He is illiterate and knows nothing about formal astronomy, yet he plays an important role in the village agriculture and economy, by observing the journey of the sun across the mountains. This is a hereditary duty of the family. We must make allowance for one or two days mistake when the sky remains overcast. I think, the Da astronomers pronouncements about these two important days are followed by the people of Garkon as well, because the latter is situated in a very narrow gorge, and they say the sun does not rise at all there for many days in winter. That

may be an exaggeration, but the man with the fine moustache in Garkon told us a humorous story in this regard. Once a Garkoni, invited an acquaintance from Ladakh (who happened to be there in December on business) to breakfast at his house, the next day, and asked him to come when the sun rose. The Ladakhi waited for the sun to rise but it did not, and the poor fellow not only missed his breakfast but his own lunch as well.

Lower altitude, with the bare rocks of the narrow gorge fiercely reflecting the sun's rays, Garkon, I think, would be hot and uncomfortable in Summer.

When we reached Garkon, which is four kilometres from Da, at about noon on the fourth day, we went to Wangdul Chogopa. S.P. knew him. The history of this family is rather interesting ; his mother whom we would call Grand-ma (Api) originally belonged to Khardong village in Nubra, and was married to a Da Brokpa whom she bore Wangyal and a younger son. The Champapa family at Garkon had an only daughter and was in need of a Makpa (husband) to look after the family cattle and fields. So, the brothers married her and came to live at Garkon and brought their mother with them, and under her supervision the family prospered. They are now integrated with the Brokpas and follow their way of life and culture.

Many years ago, the Konyer (Lama Incharge) of the Gonpa at Garkon who came from Bodh Kharbu in Purig lived in the Champapa's house and in course of time, married Grand-ma (Lamas of Kargyutya sect are allowed to marry, if they like). The old man still dresses like a Lama and spends most of his time in religious works. That Summer he got a Kik-Sum-Gonbo (a set of three mini-Chortens over the main door of the house, which is the first and the only one in the village. All of them including the grand-children, live happily under the overall supervision of Grandma.

There are 3 or 4 other families in Garkon of Ladakhi origin, settled there during the times of old Ladakhi Kings.

They are now integrated with the Brokpas and married to Dard women, but some of them still have Mongolian features.

Two Puring Muslim families lived in Garkon when I was there in January, 1981, and when we were leaving the village, we saw a beautiful teenager with rosy cheeks in Purig costume, on the road side. Pointing to the transistor radio in my hand she smilingly said, "Uncle, a photo, please". "Sorry, my dear girl, it is a radio and not a camera, but when I come again during the Grand Harvest Festival, I surely will bring a camera and take a photo of you." I replied. I came equipped with a camera and a coloured film in October and enquired about the Purig girl. I was told both the Muslim families had moved to the new Settlement at Da-Da-Do where like all new settlers (including a good number of Purig and Dard families), they got their plot of land. So much the better I thought for all concerned, as they could not be integrated with the Buddhist Dards, in Garkon.

The next man we met in the village was Skid Tsering (Happy Long Life). He was a fine specimen of his race with what I like to call, Army type moustache, long and bushy with its two ends pointing upwards naturally. He seemed conscious of his fine moustache contributing to his personality and politics. He told us he was in the Army, served as a language-teacher, and a Government paid Amchi (Local physician) and attended several political conferences in Kashmir as a Brokpa representative.

From him we learnt that a Londron of the mother of Lonpo-pa family was being celebrated that night, where everybody was welcomed for Chhang and meals. Again we were in luck, and hurried to the house with a Khatak and a packet of biscuits to inquire whether we could also participate, and if possible, see some dancing. We were welcome to the feast, they told us, but as regards the dancing we will have to ask the musicians. So we went to the Head musician's house to say that we would feel grateful if he and his companions

could play that evening for a small payment. He readily agreed, and we made the payment in advance.

When we arrived in the evening, the spacious family kitchen was packed with guests. Miskeen Tsering, another fine looking Brokpa youth, rose to greet me warmly and told the audience that I was his Headmaster in Kargil High School about 20 years ago. It gave a boost to my stature in their sight.

The lady whose Londron was being celebrated was seated near the hearth, with gents on her left and the ladies on her right Placing my Khatak on the hearth, I took my seat next to the resident Lama of the Gonpa. The Chhang was excellent and was poured from a Kashmiri brass vessel with a long curved neck and stylish handle.

After some time the guests started dancing and the ladies joined them soon after. They follow the men and not mix, as we do in Ladakh—a lady between two gents. Also they have an exclusive dance for ladies, but the music is the same. There are 2 stages in the dance and not three as the Ladakhis. They dance very slowly therefore, it takes a pretty long time to complete a circle.

The ladies hold one hand up, the index finger touching the thumb and keep it in that position throughout, and do not fold and unfold the fingers, giving a twist to the wrist at the same time, as the Ladakhi ladies do. However, they change the hand, probably when tired and hold out the other hand. Thus, there is no uniformity—one would hold up the right hand up and the next the left.

When the excitement was at its peak, the daughter-in-law of the house who, I think was the most beautiful lady in the gathering, led a dance and did it gracefully.

Afterwards I was asked to lead a dance which I did, followed by S.P. and several Brokpas. We asked for a sash and danced in the Ladakhi way—clockwise. They dance anti-clock-

wise. When we finished, like the Brokpas, we went into the adjoining cellar to have some extra-strong Chhang.

The musicians were occupying higher seats and I believe, they enjoy good respect among the Buddhist Dards, unlike their counterparts in Gilgit where they have a lower status in society. The fact is that ~~in many villages in Lower Ladakh and~~ everywhere in Brokland ordinary farmers play on the musicial instruments and do not constitute a separate class in society as Bedas in Ladakh and Doms in Gilgit.

About mid-night the second meal of Papa and melted goat-butter was served. The butter was old and a bit rancid. Europeans like fresh butter and old wine, but the Brokpas, the other way round, old butter and fresh wine. Whatever little wine they make from their grapes is not fermented or processed but just stored and sold or drunk fresh. Nor do they prune the vines, but plant them near a poplar tree and there they go on twisting round the tree.

As mentioned earlier, when we arrived, men and women were seated separately, but as more and more people came we saw several men in the ladies section, and some boys and girls were standing against the wall quite intimately. I wonder whether such freedom between the sexes was permissible in their original land before migration to Ladakh ? In Debra Denker's article a picture at page 461 shows Kalash men and women dancing together during their Chaomos Festival but in separate groups, and she does not mention anything like mass-kissing, as the Ladakhi Brokpas do during their Harvest Festival.

At 1 p.m. we thanked our host and went to our lodgings having thoroughly enjoyed the evening.

The next morning we went to interview that Lap-rdak (in Ladakhi we say Lha-Drak) about the grand Festival songs. He said they were so long that it takes them an hour and a half each of the four or five days of the Festival to recite, and advised us to come to Garkon that Autumn with a tape recorder.

I had heard so much about the Festival that I determined to see it in October and requested S.P. to come to Leh to take me when the exact days were fixed. He told me if I do not see it that year I shall have to wait till 1983 when it would be held in Da. Da and Garkon hold the festival in turn successively, and the third year is left off. It is said in former times, Ganok, a village now across the cease-fire line used to host it.

When October came I made the necessary preparations, including the loan of a camera and lessons in photography (which unfortunately did not prove as successful as I desired).

S.P. arrived on October 4, and we left Leh by the weekly truck next day, at 10.00 a.m and reached Bema late 9.30 p.m. covering a distance of 154 kilometres.

An elderly Garkoni and a Bema youth were also travelling with us and we asked the former to spend the night with us in the servant's room of the Dak-bungalow. The keeper from Purig, only reluctantly opened it when I threatened to report him to his officer on my return to Leh, if he refused. The second problem was how to boil the water for tea, as we carried no pots and pans, and again we had to approach the Chowkidar.

Our last problem for the night was to get something to spread on the bare concrete floor. We knew the Chowkidar would not oblige us even if he had something to spare. The young Brokpa willingly offered to lend his Army blanket and newly purchased quilt, and we slept soundly.

Whereas the borrowed bedding solved our problem for the night, it created one in the morning, and I might relate the incident for it throws some light on Brokpa custom and their judicial system.

When we were having breakfast at our friend Chamakpa's house, the Bema youth came there with the blanket (which we had left with the Chowkidar) to say that it was not the one he lent us. His blanket was newer and he suspected the old

Garkoni had exchanged it, as they were both old Army blankets. That was really bad and ungrateful, I thought. When we got down to the road-side the elderly man was ready to march off. I told him rather sternly that he had been ungrateful for the shelter and food we offered him the previous night and I made him unpack his bundle. Taking possession of both blankets, I sent for the Bema man and asked him to take his blanket. He took the newer one, and then the inevitable quarrel followed. The old man said, "When I purchased it in Leh were you not with me ?" He replied he was, but that did not prove anything. The Garkoni ultimately asked whether he was prepared to take an oath. "No", said the youth, "Why should I take an oath for a thing which is mine"? S.P. and I had gone to see the Festival and not to get involved in a Brokpa dispute, so I took a ten rupee note from my pocket and gave it to the elderly man and insisted that he should accept it, which he did, and the three of us marched towards Garkon.

Later on, I learnt that when a dispute over the possession of a thing cannot be proved and settled, the village Elders would take the contenders to the Gonpa and give it to the one who took the oath.

The following day when we did not see one of our acquaintances at the dancing place we were told that he had a dispute over the possession of a piece of land with his next-door neighbour and it was decided by an oath. Henceforth for a period of one year, the two men would not be allowed to attend any social or religious function together, but in turns, to avoid chances of requarreling. He would attend the second day and the other fellow would stay away. After a year or so the Elders would meet again and make the two men exchange their cup of Chhang, or drink from the same cup, and they would be reconciled, and work together and share each other's joys and sorrows again. Human nature being as it is, they must some times quarrel and fight but also had to learn to forget and forgive, particularly so, when they are living in a small village. And during the times of Ladakhi Kings it was a matter of national policy with them to have as little contact with

the Ladakhis as possible. It is said they stubornly resisted the attempts of the kings of Ladakh to make them do forced labour service. Hence there is a proverb in Ladakhi, saying that two things are impossible—loading a dog and forced labour by a Brokpa. Surrounded by alien nations on all sides, Laddakhis, Purig pas and Baltis they had to be self sufficient as far as possible for their survival as a race. Consequently, they settled all their quarrels among themselves, instead of going to courts at Leh and Kargil (But the Dogras succeeded in making them do forced labour service—Begar).

Now this isolation is breaking and even some inter-marriages have taken place with Ladakhis during recent years. The most important factor which has broken the isolation is the construction of the jeep road from Khalatse bridge to Kargil via Brokland. In a decade or so, I think it would be mettled and at least one way traffic between Khalatse to Kargil would be possible, as besides, being shorter in distance, this route would avoid the zig-zagging heights of Lama Yuru and Photola, mountains. When we were at Garkon we could hear in the evenings the resounding sound of rock blasting for the road, below the village, disturbing the peace of the valley and may be that of the Brok-Lhas as well.

Availing themselves of the easy means of transport Brokpas, in recent years are visiting Leh and Kargil more often, to sell their products, such as dried apricots and grapes, and purchase manufactured and other articles, they need.

Changes have become inevitable even in these remote and mountainous parts and it is good in some ways. The fertile land and warm climate is suitable for intensive horticulture and in course of time, fruit and wine industries would make Brokland prosperous. Good and nutritious food, proper medical care and personal cleanliness would certainly add to the physical beauty of the Brokpa men and women. On the other hand, if they do not take special care, they are in danger of losing their racial identity and cultural heritage.

To resume my story—we arrived Garkon late afternoon and went to Champapa's house where we had stayed in January.

Both Grand-ma and the elder son were there. They had moved to the top floor and 'our' room was being used as a bed-room, so they felt sorry for not being able to accommodate us this time. Besides, they were expecting some relatives for the festival. Requesting to stay in the winter kitchen was out of question as we would defile it by eating eggs and tinned milk which we had brought from Leh.

As it was getting late, and we were tired, we told them that after an early rice-vegetable dinner, we would be happy to sleep on the roof, and move to the school building the next morning. Evidently, Grand-ma was moved and said we could sleep in the leaf thatched, sort of room, adjoining their Summer Kitchen, and the milching goat could be kept in the ground floor stable. We said that would be fine. Taking a broom I swept the place and S.P. started cooking. Being a place for keeping goats I was apprehensive of fleas but fortunately, there was none and we slept soundly.

Next morning Grand-ma asked us to pack our things and bring them into the kitchen to make room for her poor goat who must be shivering in the dark room below, she said. We gladly complied and set out to the house of Tsetan, an acquaintance of S.P. to buy a bottle or two of kerosene for the cooking stove which Grand-ma had kindly lent us along with two pots.

We met Mrs. Tsetan at the kitchen door. She started sobbing because of the recent unfortunate death of her cousin, already mentioned. She told us she will not be attending the Festival, as a gesture of mourning. We found Tsetan in the top-floor room, stitching shirts for the children to wear during the Festival. A part of the roof was covered with the recently harvested Cha which according to him, if mixed with some other ingredients, makes an excellent item for breakfast for the foreign tourists in Kargil hotels.

He refused to accept payment for the bottle of Kerosene but asked us to return the empty bottle before leaving Garkon.

Thus equipped with almost all the cooking things, we climbed up the zig-zagging steps to the school building, nearly at the top of the village. When we entered, the house-owner, an old lady with a dirty piece of cloth covering one side of her face, was yelling at the few boys who were running and screaming on the spacious roof.

On our arrival some sort of order was restored and shortly afterwards, Yangchen, the lady-teacher from Dartsiks arrived. She said we were welcomed to stay in the two class rooms as the following 3 days being holidays, the school would remain closed. The adjoining room had a clay stove with a chimney where S.P. did some of the cooking on firewood, to supplement our meagre bottle of oil.

The elder son arrived in the evening and S.P. went to make a formal call, with an extra present, in addition to the usual packet of biscuits and scarf. He returned the call with a plateful of dried apricots and some items of furniture and bedding, and said, "Please do not put us to shame by not asking for anything you need."

The following day, (Oct. 8) was the most important day for us, as well as for the Brokpas—the day of inauguration of the Grand Harvest Festival.

Being a warm sunny day, after breakfast, I went to explore the neighbourhood. Just outside the entrance door, the clean and clear water of the village stream was rushing and tumbling down. Long green grass was growing on both sides, and a lone horse was grazing. In the fields, giant golden ears of Cha (their second crop) was delightful to see, and a still more wonderful sight was a terraced mini-field, just a few metres in circumference, exclusively covered with Skalzang flowers of different colours, their favourite flower during the Festival. On the outskirts of some fields, their second favourite flower 'Tung-Tung Kaliman' was growing, spreading a sweet scent around. Their third and all-weather 'flower' is the red Shoklo, belonging to the berry species. They pluck them and let the berry inside the multi-dimensional-cover dry, in

the sun, and stock them. With a strong thread they tie five of them, with a sixth in the middle, and it looks like a big red flower, A true Brokpa's cap is never seen without this 'flower' which they can wear all the year round, and when the colour fades they replace it with a fresh bunch.

Brokpas and Brokmos (ladies) simply love flowers and except for he Shoklos, the others are replaced every day, by fresh ones during the Festival.

After an early lunch we climbed to the place under the rock where the inaugural ceremony of taking the Lha to the dancing square down in the village, was to take place. We found the Lapdak and a second man sitting under a walnut tree in the only uncultivated field in the village. A few children were playing merrily. The Lapdrak readily agreed to pose for a photo (But unfortunately my photographic skill proved disappointing and most of the pictures I took were not good. The ones shown here were taken with my camera by the photographer who accompanied the official party from Kargil). The Lapdrak told me that his grandson, aged about nine years, was playing the role of the Lha. The boy had to stay near, the sort of crevice in the rock for 3 days, but came down in the evening to sleep in a separate room, in the house.

The boys playing on the field took a fancy to pelt stones at the Lha-boy above (which did not reach even a third of the distance). Child-nature over came his role as Lha and he stood up and hit back.

The Lapdrak told us that he would be very busy during the next few days. In fact, the whole show revolved round him as, in addition to being the Lapdrak he was the only person in Garkon who knew the whole of the 23 songs or hymnals, sung during the Festival (According to Francke the number is 18). He seemed worried that the musicians had not arrived and it was getting rather late. However, soon afterwards, all the concerned men started arriving.

A man carrying in a sack carsases of the two small

goats, sacrificed that morning near the rock, climbed on a boulder and started cutting the meat into small pieces for distribution. We also received our share which we cooked for dinner that night.

The fine-moustached man and a few others started mixing barley flour (Tsampa) with whey and goat butter and distributed small lumps to all assembled there.

The Lapdrak, the village-headman and some others started dancing and then climbed to the rock to bring down the Lha. The boy in the meantime, had changed into a white woollen gown and a conical cap.

The Lha-boy came down, leading the small procession and carrying what we call the Phoks (the incense pot) and blowing every now and then on the charcoal which burnt the dry pencil cedar, emitting a curling smoke. The musicians were playing down below and the small party came dancing down the slope. After a dance on the field the procession went down in a single file to the square in the village.

The Lha, placing the incense pot on a boulder disappeared in the crowd. His role was over. On the last day of the Festival, I was told, only the Lapdrak and others would go to the east end of the village for the farewell ceremony, without the boy. Of course, it would look awkward for the Lha to return to the village even in plain clothes.

The dancing place which is circular in shape is permanently built, under a huge walnut tree and surrounded by tall willows.

The long-awaited hymnals or songs, describing the migration of their ancestors, under the leadership of Gil-Singe (Lion of Gilgit) started. Only the Lapdark, the Goba (Village headman) knew them and were sung in a low monotonous tune. On both days I could not find any variation in the tune. We did not understand anything as it was sung in the Brokpa language.

I would describe the second day's performance in some detail. More or less they are similar; besides, on the first day we could not see them closely from our seats.

It started about 5.30 p.m. when the musicians arrived. The Lapdark was somewhat cross on their being late. The recitation of the songs by the same persons started, as on the first day. Soon other men joined them and sitting down they sang to the accompaniment of music. Then the ladies who were larger in number joined, forming a sort of semi-circle by themselves and some participated in the singing, which lasted for another half an our. Sometimes while singing, the men swayed right and left and bowed down their head.

Recitation for the day ended and dancing began. By this time it was dark except for the half moon light which filtering through the tall trees made patches of darkness and light on the dancing floor. On the first day, drinking is strictly forbidden by tradition, but during the rest of the festival it is freely allowed but not on the dancing-place. So, most of the young men were tipsy and dancing was brisker and then the mass kissing started. We went closer to watch. Some of the young men used their torch light to see that they kissed the right girls who giggled. The old Lapdark found a lady of appropriate age and kissed her.

The whole show lasted for an hour and a half and the two of us climbed up to our dwellings. I went to bed at 10 O' clock after taking my usual sleeping tablet, but sleep would not come. The dancing and fantastic scene kept on playing on my imagination and I began to wonder whether it was a real thing or was it a dream ? I got up and took a second tablet.

They have a second dancing session after supper every night, but we did not go to see it. We were told that the fourth and the final day of the Festival coincided with the death anniversary of their ancestral leader Gil Singe, so all of them, at the dancing place put off their be-decked caps and observe a few minutes' silence in his memory.

Dr. A.H. Francke in Vol II of his book Antiquities of

Indian Tibet has given the Bodhi text and also the English translation of one song at page 270-73. Han-Dran-Mir and Sanid are mentioned. Verse 23 in the Bodhi Text says, HOKE-YON MAL-MAL which is exactly repeated in verse 25. Francke has translated it as "This (is) a dancing place." So. MAL-MAL KHATU, in the Da mountains being their place of dancing seems confirmed.

Francke writes he discovered the collection of songs at Da. They were got written in Bodhi Script by R. Shawe (probably the founder of the Central Asian Company during the 1870's, and British Joint Commissioner of Leh for some time.) Franke arrived in Ladakh in 1899. This means the colonization songs were written in Bodhi more than 100 years ago.

The Laprdak at Garkon said their ancestors came from Gan-Dum in Gilgit, therefore the village is called Garkon. I wonder whether there still is a place called Gau-Dum in Gilgit ?

Khan Bahadur, Ghulam Mohammed Khan who was the Charas Officer in Leh during the yearly 1930's and who also served in Gilgit writes that the Dard of Da and Dras migrated from Bagrot valley in Gilgit. His article Folk Songs of Gilgit was published in the Asiatic Society Journal in 1905.

On both the evenings I saw a young man dressed in a coat and Shilwar come to see the dancing and singing, and apparently enjoying them. I thought he was a Kargili Muslim who had come to buy dried apricots. On the second day, I found him talking to some elderly ladies in their language. I was mistaken. He was not a Kargili but a Brokpa from Da-Da-Do. He was their kinsman with the difference that he had changed his religious faith, dress and culture but racially and linguistically he was their cousin. The official party which had come from Kargil hardly stayed till the end of the dancing on the first day, but this fellow came in time on the second day and probably attended the second show as well. Was it not the common ancestral and racial pull which attracted him to the Festival ?

On the second day before the dancing started when we went for a walk on the jeep road down below the village, we met a uniformed Muslim policeman from Dras, coming on foot from Kargil to see the Festival. Brokpas of Dras can be considered as their distant cousins. Was it also a racial pull ? S.P. told me he saw a number of road coolies from Dras participating in dances the previous year when it was held at Da.

Brokpas of Da-Da-Do, Chuli-Chan and several other villages lower down the Indus have adopted Islam, and have given up Brokpa dress and culture but not the language.

On the morning of our departure, the old lady of the house came and lifted the dirty piece of cloth from her face to reveal a big red running sore, below the left eye. She told me she had gone to Kargil for treatment but the doctor there said it was cancer and they could do nothing about it.

I told her if she goes to Leh I would help her in getting admitted in the hospital there. All I could do at the moment, as a gesture of sympathy, was to wash and give her my mini-tourist towel with hooks on both the ends, and leave the little gauze and half finished penicillin tube and asked her to keep the sore as clean as possible.

A Garkoni soldier was going to Srinagar in the same plane with me on Feb. 15, 1984. He told me the old lady died recently.

On the third day I told S.P. that we would leave, as we had seen enough of the Festival and besides, breaking the return journey at Da would make the trekking to Bema easier for me the next day. S.P. reluctantly agreed, so after finishing a bottle of grape wine which he had purchased for Rs. 17/-, we left for Da. It was sweet and mildly intoxicating. And we did well for we were partly able to see a Brokpa funeral on the following day.

At Da, Namgyal was not at home, as he had gone to Larsang, several kilometers away to assist the bereaved family. So we went to the Gonpa. The newly appointed resident

Lama had also gone there, but fortunately, he had left the key of the kitchen with the next door family. We opened the door and S.P. started boiling tea and even helped himself to a food of left-over dish by the Lama.

The Lama with a Brokpa, came before sunset to fetch a few ritual things for the funeral next day. We felt he was annoyed at our instrusion, therefore S.P. went into his room to say sorry with the usual scarf and biscuit packet. He was pleased and told that we could sleep in his room. He was in a hurry he said to finish the rites early the following day, and leave for Garkon to see the last day of the Festival there. Next morning after break-fast, we went to see the rock tunnel which Brokpas believe was bored by Gil Singe's arrow shot from Mal Mal Khatu. It is several metres long and undoubtedly, looks a natural tunnel. The Brokpas insist in believing that it was bored by the mighty arrow of their ancestor. This is why, they argue that the village is named Da, (which is a Ladakhi word meaning arrow), and the water gushing out of the mini-tunnel irrigates its fields.

We left early next morning and at the end of the village came down to the jeep road. About a hundred metres down below, on the bank of the river Indus we could see the dead body wrapped in white cloth lying on a stretcher. Unlike the Ladakhi Buddhists who bind the corpse with ropes into a sort of sitting position, the Brokpas keep it in full-length-lying posture. It reminded me of Hindu pyres on the bank of the Ganges at Benaras.

Earlier in January, Namgyal while digging the foundations of his house, found a grave with some utensils in it. Now the question is *whether* the Brokpas burnt or buried their dead before they adopted Tibetan Budhism ? According to S.P. Ladakhi Dards were converted to Tibetan Buddhism by Lama Samphel of Lama Yuru Gonpa about 150 years ago and the two Gonpas at Da and Garkon and the Manis were built by him.

Another question is why do they bring the dead bodies to that particular place on the river bank, from all the surrounding villages ? Carrying a dead body on a stretcher several Kilometres is very tiring, particularly over uneven terrain.

We could not see anybody dressed in red robe, on the river bank and concluded that the Lama had finished his funeral duties and left for Garkon to see the dancing. Some people must mourn and weep, while others laugh and dance and I was glad the young Lama was able to attend both the occasions on the same day.

Further on, we met a young man carrying a load of apricot twigs with green leaves to the pyre. We asked whether the freshly chopped and wet fuel would burn alright ? He assured us it would, and besides, he said, apricot wood is a must for a Brokpa pyre.

DRESS

Young ladies now-a-days mostly wear long cotton shirts and Shilwars, which of course they find more comfortable in Summer. Other changes are also taking place in their dress such as long manufactured ribbons of different colours, silver jewellery and cheap corals. Not many years back, they would decorate their caps with row of needles, silver coins, buttons and cowery shells. At Da, I found an old lady's cap decorated with rows of barley grains and flat round beans which were strung on a thread while fresh. The uniformity in colour and made them look nice. Both man and women mostly wear their ~~size~~ jewellery and decorations on their caps. The most colourful item of men's dress is their woollen cap, similar in shape and design to those worn by people of Kulu and Kyelang, but bigger and broader to accommodate their flowers and other decorations.

Men on Festive occasions, wear a jacket over their long Ladakhi-styled dress, with multi-coloured borders sown one over the other. The men also wear long ear rings of small silver beads with one big white button above the ear lobes.

I did not see any old artifact in their house which are different from those of Ladakhis. In fact, they have very little house-hold furniture and utensils. Like those of Lower Ladakh families, there is an iron hearth in the main kitchen with 4 tongues to hold the pot. Around it, all the family members sit and eat.

LANGUAGE

Beyond Bema, they are bi-lingual. Both men and women can speak Ladakhi with a Purig (Kargil) accent fluently. So we could talk with them directly without any interpreter.

The Lapdrak at Gargon said that like the rabbit's meat their language is a mixture of several languages (both the Brokpas and Ladakhis think that a rabbit's flesh partly taste like mutton, beef and fowl). Almost all their personal names are Ladakhi and also those of some villages like Da and Chuli-Chan; and of course, all things pertaining to religion. May be 10-15% of their vocabulary is Ladakhi.

I wrote down the Brokpa vocabulary for about one hundred words of every day use and later on, comparing them with the Shina vocabulary given by Dr. G.W. Leitner in his book Dardistan and Kashmir etc. published in 1889. Surprisingly, about 20 words, more or less, tallied with Shina (Gilgiti). I am giving a list below. The numericals from one to hundred of both the languages are very similar, based on Hindustani.

ENGLISH	*BROKPA*	*SHINA*
1 One	ik	eyk
2 Two	du	du
3 Three	tera	tre
4 Four	chor	chhar
5 Five	ponch	pon
6 Six	sra	sha
7 Seven	sat	sath
8 Eight	ashat	atsh

9	Nine	nua	nau
10	Ten	dash	dah
11	Eleven	ko-dash	ka
12	Twelve	bu-dash	bah
15	Fifteen	pan-dash	panzey
20	Twenty	bija	bi
21	Twenty-one	bija-ik	bija ek
30	Thirty	bija-dash	bija dai
40	Forty	du-buju	du-bio
60	Sixty	tera bhju	du-bioga dai
100	Hundred	sho	shal
	Nose	nutu	nuto
	Mouth	oozi	aze
	Hand	hath	hath
	Knee	ko-to	kuto
	Flower	pu-sro	pusho
	Sun	suri	suri
	Moon	gyun	ynn
	Uncle	mumo	mu-mu
	Grand-mother	De-de	dadi
	Grand-father	du-do	de-de
	~~House~~ Horse	apash	ashap
	Ugly	chu-to	khats to
	Wet	shu-ko	shu-ko
	Eat	kha	kha
	Drink	pi	pi
	Sit	bish	bey
	Stand	oo-thas	utho
	No	na	ne'
	Sleep	sus	so
	Sour	chu koro	tshu rko

Hanu is situated about 20 kilometres away from Da towards Leh, in the east. Upper and Lower Hanu together, is about 10 kilometres long, and further up is Han-Drang Min near Chorbat pass.

Apparently, the shribe who wrote the Dard text of the song in Bodhi, for Shawe, mis-heard the second word as MIR

and not MIN. Thus, the letter R and N made a lot of diffe-rence in understanding the meaning. Han-drang in Ladakhi means dumb and Min ripen. Dumb Ripened, i.e. ripened without cultivation. At Da and Garkon, they explained that the ancestors before settling at Hanu came for reconnoitring, bringing some barley grain which they put into the earth before leaving, and when they came back next year they found fine ears of barley ripening. Isn't it a beautiful name with history behind it ?

S.P. who is now posted as a school teacher at Hanu says that the Brokpas there, also celebrate their Harvest Festival and drink and dance, but no kissing. Further-more, their ancestral leader was Tho-Srali and not Gil Singe. Therefore, it is yet to be ascertained whether they all belong to one tribe or Hanu was settled by a different tribe.

It is said that a king of Ladakh persuaded Hanu Dards to give up their language and dress and hence they speak only Ladakhi, similar to that of Lower Ladakh with a Purig accent, and the men wear Ladakhi caps, but not the women. If the idea was integration with the Ladakhis, they were mis-taken, for that did not happen.

He also told me that due to restricted choice cousin marriages and between near relatives is fairly common in Hanu. In Ladakh even second cousin marriage among the Buddhists is very rare.

According to 1981 Census the population of the four big villages of Hanu, Da, Dartsiks and Garkon is 2467. If we add another 600 or so, for the rest of the villages the total Buddhist population would be about 3000, living between Hanu and Batalik a distance of about 180 kilometres.

To conclude the story—we reached Bema in the afternoon and the next day travelled back to Leh by the weekly truck.

What a nice coincidence that the 'Tourist Lama' was a co-traveller on the last day. He got down near the Khalatse



Some Brokpa youth and children near the barren field.



The Lha boy holding the insence pot at the barren field. His grandfather (right) leading the dance,



A Brokpa youth with a torch light in pocket talking to the Laprdak.



Ladies in colourful costumes and bedecked caps dancing on the dancing square. Author (seated extreme left).

bridge with his bags of dried apricots and bitter kernels of apricots, to take another truck to Srinagar. He would get oil extracted from the kernals by machine and bring it back along with other things.

Outside Ladakh, only a few people know about the Buddhist Dards even in our own State, and there is no denying the fact that they have largely been neglected. There is not a First Aid Centre in the whole of Brokland; and there are only two Brokpa Matriculates. Though the Primary School in Hanu has been in existence for more than 30 years there is not a single Middle pass from there. But quite a number of Brokpas (mostly from Hanu) are recruited in the Ladakh Scouts and with their fine features they make smart soldiers.

Culturally they have lost some ground both in the east and the west. Brokpas themselves should take effective steps to preserve their racial and cultural identity in the rest of the area.

I shall be happy if my article serves a little towards that end.

2

Adventures of Baba Kalam

The last three decades of the Nineteenth Century and first two of the present century could be called as the age of discovery of Central Asia and Tibet, and many distinguished Britons and European explorers, geographers and surveyors came to Leh from where caravans were arranged to proceed to many unexplored parts of these countries. Also, many British Army Officers came for games, to shoot ibexes and antelopes. To serve these sahibs, a group of young Argons lent their services as grooms, cooks and orderlies. Besides, being physically strong and enterprising they spoke both Turki and Tibetan well, which was another advantage for their masters, and in my personal opinion, they enjoyed travelling and meeting challenges, like these Europeans.

Argons are the Muslim descendents of Kashmiris, Kishtwaris, Pathans, Panjabis and Yarkandis who ovar the centuries, came to Ladakh, married Ladakhi wives and made Ladakh their home.

Rachung, Rasul Galwan, Baba Kalam, Shukur Ali were some of the well known servants of Sahibs as appropriately termed by Rasul Galwan in his book with the same title. Most of the servants were grooms to look after the transport ponies, horses and mules, feeding and grazing them, to see that the horse's shoes are in order, shodding new ones whenever necessary, mending the saddlery, for which they would always carry, dangling by their sash or belt, a sharp long knife in a skin cover and big needles in another, packing, loading and unloading the ponies and pitching the tents would be other work they had to do.



Baba Kalam on the steps of Leh mosque.

The cook with his assistant would travel ahead of the others and on reaching the next camp, after pitching their own small kitchen-tent, start cooking.

In those days most of the Sahibs would travel in style and comfort. His sais (groom) would always follow him with the pony so that he may ride when tired or feel inclined. If the sahib was fond of games, another servant would carry his gun, cartridge binocular compass, altimeter and may be his lunch.

On reaching camp he would find his folding-bed made, the table laid and the folding-canvas-washing basin filled with fresh water. He would be equipped with the latest travelling gear, like warm bedding, tinned food and stout comfortable boots. Those were colonial days and the white man was feared, but also greatly respected.

On the other hand, while the servants were snoring in their sleep the sahib with the light of the hurricane lantern would be writing his diary, and sorting out and arranging the flora and geological specimen he had collected during the day.

Some Sahibs greatly praised the work of their servants. Sir Francis Younghusband, praises the work of his servant Shukur Ali. On reaching Srinagar after their long and difficult journey over the Mustagh glaciers when Shukur Ali requested for a special favour of getting his family exempted from the BEGAR (forced labour) Sir Francis got it sanctioned by the state Govt. through she British Resident. It was a great boon for Shukur Ali and his descendents.

Recently when I read Mr. Abdul Gani Sheikh's article, in Urdu, Ladakhi Argon Muhimjoo (expeditionists) a Jammu and Kashmir publication of the Cultural Academy 'Hamara Adab' in which he described the adventures of some of them, including a little of those of Kalam Rasul, I thought I owe a duty to tell what I knew about Kalam Rasul (I like to call him Baba Kalam) for I had heard the story of his adventures to Peking from his own lips and had partly written it in 1973. Besides Mr. Sheikh kindly placed at my

disposal the unfinished Notes dictated by Baba Kalam to Munshi Mohi-ud-din, in 1933, and a photograph of the adventurer and two testimonials by the Sahibs—Capt. Wellby and Majar Malcolm, to Ishey Tsering, one of the servants (reproduced at the end).

Mr. Sheikh has made a valuable contribution by researching about these Argon adventurers, and I am told his script on Rasul Galwan after whom the Galwan valley east of Saser is named on the map, was broadcast by All India Radio.

Mr. Sheikh rightly says that had Baka Kalam been literate. and written about his travels he would have been a famous man.

These valuable documents helped me to know the names of the two Sahibs, the year of their journey, the number of servants, the direction of their travel in the first instance and some other details. So, my story is based on what I had heard from the man and the Notes.

Descriptions of his other earlier travels in Central Asia with Younghusband (he was only a Captain then) Lord Denmore, and Littledale are given in more detail in the Notes. It would be interesting to know whether these British travellers and explorers mention Kalam Rasul in their writings. Littledale's expedition, according to the Notes originated from Khotan in Sinkiang and they seem to have reached very near Lhasa. It is a pity that the half-paged Notes in the middle of the description of Baba Kalam's journey to Peking which starts at page 69 comes to an abrupt end at page 92.

As a boy I heard from others about Baba Kalam's travels with Europeans and in particular he and his younger brother's arrival in Peking, and I was so fascinated that I wanted to hear them from the man himself.

After finishing my studies in Srinagar, when I returned to Leh in 1940, I suggested to my friends Sula, Stobdon Srangara, Amir Din and to our elders, my father Abaley Tharchin,

Baba Gulam, Baba Juma, Kaga Kadir, about holding a night of listening to Baba Kalam's adventures, all said it was a good idea and my friends and I subscribed for two meals, Ladakhi tea and firewood to heat the room. The venue was Baba Kalam's own sitting room.

As recreation during the long winter nights, my father and his friends used to hold fortnightly or monthly parties and hire some well-known story tellers like Popo and Lak-Ja to listen to the epic of Gyalum Kesar. During our own ~~items~~ days, Qadir Ali of Shey used to be the favourite story teller.

In this way, on a winter's night in January, 1941, three generations of Ladakhis met to listen to this great story teller.

Only Juma his younger brother was present to whom he sometimes during the narration, asked whether he was on the right track. It is a pity that we did not invite Ishey Tsering from Sabu. Little did I know that one day I would be writing their story.

Baba Kalam had several characteristics of a born story teller-fluency of language, lucidity of description, modulation in voice, appropriate actions and an occasional dash of exaggeration, here and there, without which one would be a dull story teller. He could make others laugh but never did himself.

Strangely enough, he narrated the last portion of his journey (from Srinagar to Leh) first. They had arrived there from Peking, via Urumchi, Kashgar, Hunza, Gilgit and Srinagar. They were penniless.

It was mid June and the British Joint Commissioner was due to proceed to Leh on his annual visit with a big entourage of clerks, Ladakhi peons and ponies. A good opportunity to travel with fellow countrymen, free ride and free meals.

One day Baba Kalam was riding alone, ahead of the party; the portion of the road between Gund and Sonamarg, known

as Hung-i-za was beautiful, the high mountain on the left, rising almost upright and the foaming water of the Sind roaring and leaping over the boulders through giant pine trees. He was young, mome-sick and probably love-sick and he sang this faith song 'Khyorang ta........O, you faithless one, I did not think of my God to the extent I did you :

My trecherous lady, I did not think of my parents, with the same fervour as I did you.

Had I thought of my God and Friend, I might have accomplished a bit of my religious obligations.

Had I thought of my parents, I would have repaid their love in a small measure.

Sonamarg was the next stage for halt, Baltal, Matayan and then Dras where the Commissioner felt an urgent need to send a letter to his wife at Gulmarg, and ordered its despatch with the smartest courier and get the reply before he reached Leh. Who could be a smarter man than Kalam Rasul ? (Allowing a day's halt at Kargil and one more at Spituk the Commissioner's Party would reach Leh in ten days from Dras and it is possible that Baba Kalam accomplished the task. Later, in early 1900's a marathon, non-stop race on horse-back between the Leh Commissioner and the Gilgit Political Agent with a local servant each, did the journey of 240 miles from Leh to Srinagar in about 24 hours. Ponies were changed at every five miles or so, where men waited with horses and bonfire.

As soon as the letter was given to him, he went to the nearby willow grove, cut a stout branch, peeled its bark, carefully slit a portion into two, placed the envelope in between, and tied the two ends with strings. He then hurried to the bath-room of the rest house, tore a piece of red curtain of the ventilator and attached it to the stick. Selecting the fastest pony collected there for the Commissioner's party, he galloped towards Kashmir. The red cloth and the sealed envelope, plus the personality of the courier meant immediate attention

everywhere on the way, to and fro. He dashed back with the reply and delivered it at Spituk to the Sahib Bahadur; got a pat on his back and a Bakhshish of a few rupees.

The manner of carrying the letter is also interesting. Urgent letters, from what we called Big Men, in Ladakh used to be carried in this way, in olden days, to reach destination unspoiled. But the red piece of cloth for a flag was purely the outcome of Baba Kalam's resourceful mind.

The two Britons, Major N. Malcolm of 93rd Highlanders and Captain Neill Wellby, 18 Hussars, left Leh in 1896, early summer with Tokhta Akhon as Caravan Bash (leader) and 6 Ladakhies—Usman Chunka, Mohmad Rahim, Lasu Argon, Kalam Rasul and his younger brother Juma Malik, Shukur Ali, Sulu Purigpa, as Sais (groom); Ishey Tsering a Ladakhi Buddhist, as cook, and an Afghan named Shahzada. (In the notes after the Afghan's name the word surveyor is written).

Tokhta Akhon's salary, as Head of the Caravan, was fixed at Rs. 50/-P.M. and of the rest at Rs. 20/- Thokta Akhon had come with the Sahibs from Srinagar, but his choice, according to Baba Kalam was a mistake as he had not much experience as a traveller. Shukur Ali or Baba Kalam himself who had travelled in Central Asia and Tibet would have been a wiser choice. Besides, as most of the servants were Ladakhis, an Argon leader would have been the right person as Caravan leader, and also for the purchase of right kind of horses and mules at Leh, for the long journey. The Sahibs did not tell them the destination of the journey. That was another mistake. So, in the Notes after crossing Lanak-La no name of place or camp is mentioned.

One night the pack-animals, which were left for grazing strayed far away from Camp, and it took the grooms a whole day to get them back. The Sahibs told Baba Kalam that they had deserted with the animals. However, they reached Camp with the animals before it got dark.

They pushed on, disheartened, no sign of human habitation

anywhere in sight. As far as I can make out, they were travelling east on the high plateau of Tibet, south of the Kun-lun range. Only after reading Wellby's book, these details can be ascertained. Baba Kalam says that after travelling several days when they failed to reach any nomad camp, the Sahibs too seemed to have lost their bearings, inspite of their maps and compasses. When Tokhta became somewhat sick, Welly asked Baba Kalam to take charge as Caravan leader, but he made it clear that change of leadership in the wilderness would not improve matters much. However, Baba Kalam accepted the promotion.

After some time a real tragic incident took place in the wilderness. To understand and appreciate it fully I must explain the background leading to it and take the readers back to Leh.

During the Dosmoche festival in Leh sometime towards the end of February, the pensioned King and Queen of Ladakh would officially come to Leh from Stok to preside over the festival and stay in the palace for a week or ten days. After the first 2 days of religious dances and Pujas, for 3 days the King would come down from the old palace accompanied by many Ladakhi aristocrats on horse-back, to his residence in the centre of the bazar, to watch the horse races.

Even when I was a boy the most interesting item of the final day was the display of Ishey Phuntsog Gangba's gunmanship on horse-back. I think it was a family duty of the Gangbas and I well remembered his skill, at least it appeared to us so. As soon as he entered the Balkang Gate on his lean and mild pony, with his match-lock gun he would fire the already loaded gun. Now ambling on his pony to the tune of the royal musicians who would be seated below the King's balcony, he wou'd draw a little gun-powder somewhere from his breast pocket, put it in the barrel, put a piece of rag and press it with the iron rod, attached below the gun. Now he would put a pinch of gun-powder on, what we call the gun-eye of the barrel and fire the second shot with the smoking fuse

around his neck, somewhere in the middle and the last one at the end of the bazar.

One unfortunate day, Mohmad Rahim was assigned the duty of carrying one of the Sahib's gun. It so happened that a flock of wild ducks flew past them and the Sahib on horse-back and Mohmad Rahim on foot followed the direction of the birds and asked the others to push on. The Sahib loaded the gun but no occasion to fire arose, as the flock disappeared soon, from view. He handed the gun back to the Argon without unloading the cartridge, nor did the Argon, and the cartridge remained in the chamber. Rahim put it into the canvas case, and slung it over his shoulder. For some reason, the Sahib ordered the groom to proceed on the horse, and himself stayed hehind.

A long file of men and animals was plodding along on the plain. Baba Kalam and another servant was bringing up the rear on foot. Mohmad Rahim soon overtook them. Riding on horse-back and carrying a gun, he was strongly reminded of the match-lock feats of Gangpa, on Dosmoche, in Leh. He told Baba Kalam he would play Gangpa and off he gallopped and ceremoniously taking out the gun from the case and pulling forward the trigger took his aim not in the air but on the moving line of the Caravan. BANG and the silence of the steppes was shattered and a man in the Caravan rolled in the dust. It was the unfortunate Sulu Purigpa who was seriously hit.

The two Sahibs were furiously angry and a thorough investigation followed. They were somewhat satisfied when Baba Kalam pointed out that in forgetting to unload the gun the Sahib was also partly responsible for the incident. Sulu was bandaged and put on a horse. There was not much hope for his survival.

This incident must have strengthened the suspicion of the two Sahibs on the reliability of the Argons. They must have read about the murder of Delegeish by the Afgan on Kara-

karam Pass about 8 years back. Straying of the ponies earlier related, must have been another thing which biased the Sahibs against the Argons.

Thokta who was ailing, and the wounded man had to be left behind to struggle as best as they could and reach camp in the evening which they did for two or three days. Then they were seen no more. That is the way of the caravan in the wilderness. If you are out of steps you are gone. If you cannot keep pace with it you are left behind. The others cannot afford to stay to nurse you. There is no other course. The caravan cannot wait even for a day and risk the lives of the rest of the men and animals, particularly in a situation like theirs.

With more pack animals dying and food getting scarcer, day by day, and no sign of habitation anywhere in sight, the Sahibs had to abandon several unnecessary things in order to travel light.

There is no one to tell how and when Thokhta and the Parikpa died. Did Tokhta leave the Purikpa behind and himself struggled forward in the vain hope of catching up with the caravan. Life is so precious-one clings to a straw while drowning as the saying goes. Or did they stay together for the rest of their remaining few days in this world ? If the Purikpa died earlier, was Thokhta scared to ~~the~~ be left with a dead body ? How over-powering must be the silence ?

More pack animals died and ration bags got thinner as they pushed on in the wilderness. After travelling for one and half months from Leh, one day the Sahibs suggested that Baba Kalam and the other three Argons should go back. They could eat the flesh of the dead animals fallen in the way and reach some human habitation. The Argons said it was unthinkable, they would never find the way back home and pleaded that they would do or die together—sink or swim together; as the idiom says. Evidently, the Sahibs were scared on the possibility of mutiny on the part of the Argons. The order was repeated after a day or two and the 4 Argons held a consultation. They argued that the Sahibs had hired them and there

was no justification to abandon them in the wilderness. (The version given in the Notes leading to the accidental shooting is different. I have given here the one we heard) Usman who was a strong and spirited young man suggested confrontation and killing the Sahibs. But Baba Kalam brought him to his senses by saying, "Even if we are lucky to get back to Leh, do you think we can live there undetected after killing two English men ?" May be, there were exchange of hot words between the Sahibs and the Argons but Baba Kalam makes no mention, either in the story, or in the Notes. The situation worsened with each passing day and the Sahibs ordered the 4 Argons, Baba Kalam, Mohd. Rahim, Juma Malik and Usman Chunka not to follow them. They had no alternative but to say 'Tawakkal' and stay behind. Only after reding Wellby's book we can come to a sort of decision as to what actually happened. But all the participants in this tragic drama are now dead. Let their souls remain in peace.

Earlier in Ladakhi, Baba Kalam had requested the cook, Ishey Tsering to leave behind some fire and leaves of boiled tea and anything eatable, while winding up the camp, for they would be following their tracks. Ishey did so, for several days, but the Sahibs came to know about it and while the 4 were lying hidden behind some sort of cover, they came forward, and pointing their guns threatened to shoot, if they followed them any longer. In my opinion. the suspicion of the Sahibs that the Argons were following to murder them, was confirmed.

Now the 4 Argons were entirely on their own in the vast northern pleatue of Tibet. Fortunately, realizing the importance of fire they managed to carry some live by burning some pieces of their dress and some yak dung.

They must have some utensils to carry water, whenever and wherever they found it, for it was more important than food. In the Notes Baba Kalam further says that they found one or two empty bags, thrown away by the Sahibs and their nooks and corners contained some wheat flour. Each keeping a little in his pocket—put a pinch in his mouth, and they

walked on and on. Also they ate roots of certain grass and for some time leather was the most important item of their diet. Baba Kalam, as party leader, strictly rationed all leather goods, boots, Charoks (soft Yarkandi footwear) belt etc. Roasting on fire and breaking them into small pieces on stone, he says they chewed it with roots of grass and may be sometimes they boiled them (Here the Notes come to an end) (Also the journey from Srinagar to Leh described here, is not mentioned in the Notes). I asked how they knew about the direction they were travelling. and Baba Kalam replied Peking was their destination, and they knew, it was in the east. So, the rising sun was their guide.

They were very weak now, all leather goods having been eaten. So to boost their morale, one day, he made a sort of speech and dramatically cutting the cord of his Tawiz (amulet) which he was wearing round his neck, and tearing open the cotton cover, took out the paper on which verses from the Quran were written and distributed, a bit to each, to eat, saying, "This is Kalam Ullah (words of God) to sustain you." And each chewed his bit.

The next sensational thing in the story, is the killing of a Dong—the famous and furious-looking wild yak of Upper Tibet. We asked how could he do such a thing without a gun ? But he said he did it. They saw a herd and they found out where they rested for the night, which fortunately was near some boulders. Equipped as he was with a sort of dagger which every Central Asian or Tibetan traveller carried in a leather cover, dangling from his sash, he carefully stalked and with as much caution and dexteritiy, as he was capable of in his weakened state, jumped from the boulder and landed on a Dong. Once on its back, with a sharp knife, killing it would not be a difficult task. It would take fright and running at full speed, tire itself out. The long shaggy hair would provide easy grasp, and one could stab it in the ribs. I think Baba Kalam a good rider with an easy attitude towards problems of life, may even have enjoyed it. We must realise they were in a desparate situation, and could do any desparate thing.

An adult Dong, is a huge creature, more than half a ton in weight, I should think, and provided them enough meat, though tough, to last for a long time, if they were able to preserve it. They had good teeth and hungry stomachs. Dong meat was finished and they were again feeling the pangs of hunger.

Now he told us a thing which was more incredible. I do not know how it can be explained. They were hungry, and exhausted, and had to rest at a certain place, towards evening, they found big pieces of roasted meat which they ate with gusto. I objected, how could such a thing be possible, in a wilderness, with no sign of life anywhere ? But he insisted they found them hot, and ate them. He asked his younger brother Juma, who confirmed it by nodding his head. Hallucination ?

Tragedy again struck them. One of the two Argons Usman Chunka was taken ill, and found it difficult to walk. One more friend out of steps. When they reached a place where there was a spring, he requested to be left there, the other three formed a line to say prayers for the comfort of the dying man.

I would like to speculate about the lonely man left behind. What were the thoughts of the sick man ? Was he frightened at night. Did he linger for a few days or was Death quick ? Yet in a sense to me at least, it seems a beautiful way of dying. Not a soul around, no care, no attachment, no trouble to anybody, under nobody's obligation, no wailing and no weeping, no kafan (shroud) and no coffin, no feasting no fasting in the name of the dead ! There is a Ladakhi proverb—All are born in the same manner, but die in a hundred different ways.

I would as well express my feelings regarding old age and death. If you are fairly happy and healthy say after 80, it is alright. You are welcome to score a century if it continues like that. But if your sight is failing, your hearing power is worsening. You are bed-ridden for long, you are allowed to eat this thing but not that, your teeth are falling, you are bent

and your steps are faltering, your face is all wrikles, you are sometimes talking non-sense, as many old people do, you are reduced to a skeleton, and you are a ghost of your former self, you are a burden to your own self and to your near and dear ones, then death would be a merciful thing.

At 69, if my kidney is failing I would not allow a transplant or be kept on dialysis. Under such conditions, I would not like my life to be prolonged for a few months or years with injections and blood transfusions, by specialist doctors. I would not like even to be hospitalised. We make too much fuss about death and disease as if human beings are an endangered species. (This is not to under-rate the benefits of modern medicines and treatment.)

In Ladakh I heard many such old people say "I wish to die now, without being much of a burden to my children" when I enquire about their health. I fully subscribe to their wish in regard to my own self, also.

The cycle of birth, childhood, youth, old age and death, whether in the world of vegetation or animal life or human life must go on and on. Some have a short span, others a little longer. Somebody has said nothing is permanent except change. So we need not be unduly alarmed.

Now Luck. From a distance they saw a black animal lying at a green patch. Was it another Dong ? They approached very cautiously not to give it a fright. But no, it was only an exhausted yak left there by a Chinese or Tibetan Caravan. The poor yak showed no sign of resistance. Quickly they bound its legs, one held its horns, and Baba Kalam took out his long and sharp knife, to slaughter it in the Muslim way. When the blood was gushing out of his slashed throat, Juma cupping his hands, was drinking warm blood. Baba Kalam allowed them and himself to drink only a small quantity and then soup. Solid food on empty stomach, he said would cause bad reaction. They had reached a camping site on the trade route between China and Lhasa,

A few days after a Tibetan Caravan returning from China or Mongolia camped at this site, on their way to Lhasa. Abdul Rahim decided to go with it to Lhasa, and thence to Leh. But Baba Kalam insisted on proceeding to Peking (as if he were an emissary, and the emperor of China was going to give him audience.) Juma had little choice but to accompany him. How could he allow his elder brother to go alone ? After some time they neared a nomad's camp. But to avoid the big Tibetan watch dogs, and reach the people, was a problem. Baba Kalam decided to pretend to be a Buddhist pilgrims and both started Kotowing crying 'Mala-Khala' and bowing and stretching full length on the ground, mark the ground where his hands reached, and rising up, walked the small distance of body-length and repeat the exercise. (Buddhist devouts do so even now days, in the holy first month of the Buddhist Calendar, and circumambulate the Leh town, a distance of about 4 kms. in this manner, in three days. I met a Ladakhi at Riwalsar (Tso-Padma) in 1978, who covered a distance of about 330 kms. from Rivalsar to Phakspa (Kidar Nath Temple, in Lahaul) over the Rotang pass in this manner, which took him several months. He had to carry a minimal of food and a small bedding, in a ruck-sack. As he could not kotow with the load, he had to leave it at a place and kotowing, say two hundred metres, leave a mark there ; and walk back to fetch the ruck-sack, and carry it up to that place, leave it again and kotow again. In this way, he kotowed 330 metres and walked double the distance to get the ruck-sack, a total distance of 990 kilometres. I marvelled at this physical stamina and religious faith.

The two brothers received warm hospitality from the nomads and recouping their strength with milk products, resumed their journey.

Further on, they reached settled habitation, and somewhere they found several deserted villages, due to factional fightings. They walked into a deserted monastery and saw articles of worship, and bronze statuettes. A spear was the only thing which Baba Kalam carried—probably to make a

walking stick. Some gold or silver artifacts would have made them rich in Leh But Baba Kalam knew it was risky. Besides, as Rasul Galwan, his contemporary, in his book "Servants of Sahibs" writes that Kalam Rasul was careless about money matters. Further on, somewhere over a bridge, they encountered, what Baba Kalam described, as a suspicious-looking man. The man tried to pick up a quarrel with them, or arrest them. Nobody else was in sight. Baba Kalam told his younger brother in Ladakhi that the fellow should be got rid of, and they threw him over-board, into the river, and ran away. (Hope he was able to save himself by swimming to the bank.) However, let us proceed with the story.

Walking, riding and occasional lifts in horse-drawn carts, the two, at long last, reached their destination—Peking.

The two Sahibs and Ishey Tsering and other servants had left for Calcutta by sea. He said, in Peking they met, a European, whom he knew. I wonder who he was ? The authorities took charge of them and they stayed in Peking for some time at Chinese expense. The authorities decided that the two Ladakhis should be sent to Kashgar under guard, to enable them to proceed further, to their country. And the rest of the journey to Leh has already been described.

FOOT NOTES :

1. I interviewed Baba Nurdin Sheikh at Srinagar in March 1984. He is 91 and as a young man, he worked as a tailor in Leh, with Baba Juma. Juma told him that he drank fresh blood of the yak, which made him sort of drunk.

2. Juma also told him that the two brothers, later on in the journey, worked as servants in a nomad camp for quite sometime, and when they resumed their journey, each was given a horse and provisions.

3. He also heard about the Argon, who returned to Leh, via Lhasa with long hair and beard. And that the parents of

Baba Kalam and Juma took them to be dead, and prayers and feeding of people, in the name of the dead, were performed.

4. Killing of a wild Dong by jumping on its back from a boulder, is a controversial thing and I discussed the subject with some Ladakhis in Leh recently. Akbar Bijal heard Baba Kalam tell the story twice, in the same way we heard it. Men have killed lions and other ferocious animals with clubs so, some say it could be possible Others like Sula, (Baba Kalam's nephew) think it must have been a sick Dong or a dead Dong that they found. Ramzan Din says that, even if Baba Kalam was able to land successfully on the wild yak, it would have rolled over and crushed him, but Tsering Phuntsog Shanu when asked, says the first reaction of the Dong would be to take fright and run However that may be, I have related the story as I heard from Baba Kalam.

5. Mr. Ghani Sheikh ascertained from Usman Chunk's relatives that he did not return to Leh. They think he married and settled down in Lhasa. May be he recovered and reached Lhasa, while Tsering Phuntsog, who is also related to the Chunkas, think that Usman died in the wilderness.

In between the meals Baba Kalam made us regale with laughter with his jokes. After dinner which consisted of rice and curd among other things, he refused to drink Ladakhi tea. "Not now", he said "Why Baba Kalam ?" we asked. You see, I have just taken rice and curd, which being white in colour, are like lay men (Ladakhi laity in villages even now wear white undyed woollen dress) and are comfortably seated in my stomach. If I drink tea which is red in colour the lay men in the stomach, would say—"The Lamas, The Lamas" and as a gesture of respect, they would stand up, and there would be confusion in my stomach and you well know the result." We requested him for some more. One of the Afghan servants with whom he travelled, was so tall that when he wanted to ride a donkey, he would stand astried and ask us to drive the donkey between the legs." This may be possible in the case of a small Ladakhi donkey, if some body were to pull it by the

ears and another to push it, but not with the big Central Asian donkey.

One more story, we requested. When he was not journeying he would act as a horse-broker between the Central Asian Turkis and the Ladakhis. One buyer from Upper Ladakh whom he knew to be a simple fellow with little knowledge about Leh and its surrounding, he said, "Nono (a term of respect) this horse which has become so lean and thin after its long journey from Kashgar, is in fact so fast that if you ride it with a good whip in your hand, at dawn at Spituk-Khang-Stak, you would reach Mitsik-chu-lung before it gets dark—n (distance of a mere 8 Kms.) and we roared with laughter.

Baba Kalam composed a song and set it to tune, which is still broadcast by Leh Radio Station sometimes. If I were to translate it would be something like this :

Leaving the young ones in the nest, Papa Bird went to China to bring them some chick-food;

In China I smoked a Hukka and exaled its smoke towards Leh

My splenderous Leh;
May its fragrance reach there.

But no, we have some other heritage left by Baba Kalam and others like Rachung and Rasul Galwan who travelled to Sinkiang and China—some dances. The tall-man, the Dragon and Lion dances and finally Kishti (boat) which they had seen there and introduced them in Leh.

During my father's days these dances were regularly performed on the BJC's tea party and their own annual archery. He would play the role of the queen in the boat. During our own days Stobdan Shangare would play this role, and Meme-Ishey Tsering, who was also a good painter, would come from Saboo for doing the makeup. I regret now, I never asked him about his adventures with Wellby.

My father and Baba Gulam had the boat frame and paper-cabin etc. made, and stored in Charas godown and would lend us when we held our Archery. Ladakhis are indeed merry deople, and seize any occasion to dance and sing.

I am glad some of these Tamashas are now being revived by Ladakhi youth. Last year, I guess, half the population of Leh and the neighbouring villages watched for hours the week-long Ladakh Festival, arranged by the Tourist Department whcn some of these dances were performed.

As you see in his picture, Baba Kalam was very particular about his dress, the most striking item would be his brightly polished black Russian, Jack boots, reaching up to the knees. On Fridays, he would wear a long Turkish stilk tunic, with wide coloured stripes, and a white turban tied in Turki fashion and after prayers, he would take his time descending the flight of steps of Leh mosque, so that people like me, could admire his dress. Thus attired, he could be mistaken for a Bai (millionnaire) from Sinkiang. Few people knew about his bank accounts, and fortunately or unfortunately, we did not have any bank in Leh in those days. I knew his younger brother Juma well. He was a neighbour and a family friend. He carried all his cash, literally cash because I do not think there were currency paper notes of small denominations in those days. It consisted of a few one rupee ringing coins, and he carried it in a knot in his sash around his Ladakhi dress.

As already mentioned Baba Kalam would act as a horse-broker, and as a boy I saw him at the job many times. First the three of them (the seller, the buyer and the broker) would examine the teeth of the horse to, determine its age. Afterwards the Yarkandi would show them all the four hoofs, lifting each on his knee. Now the seller and then the buyer would in turn, have a ride, to see its gait. Then the bargaining in the language of fingers, Baba would hold the Yarkandi's right hand in his long sleeve. If the Yarkandi pressed all the 5 fingers of Baba Kalam and then half of the Index finger, it would mean 55/- rupees, for each finger represents Rs. 10/-.

Baba Kalam who spoke Turki fluently, would say something like this, "What are you talking about ?" Then holding the Ladakhi's hand, he would indicate the cost. The Ladakhi would say, "Too much." More holding of fingers, and finally Baba Kalam would strike the deal by pressing four fingers then half of the Index finger. With his glib talk to both in their respective language, convince them that it was the reasonable price.

Sometimes, Baba Kalam would visit an acquaintance who had recently arrived from Yarkand. They would stand up, fold their hands across the abdomen and slightly bow, and then extend both hands towards the visitor who would hold them lightly in his, (no shaking) and say "Obdan Bama, Yakshi Bama. Thishlek Bama (Are you well, O.K. fine) God be thanked, they would reply and all would sit down on their knees with feet under the buttaks. (That is their etiquette) Small talks like—How was the road and the journey would ensue. Meanwhile, the Dustarkhan would be spread and pulao, cooked in oil and fat with thinly sliced carrots would be served in a common plate, with the rice heaped over the meat pieces. 'Bis min-la' and all would start eating, taking each morsel slowly and carefully, not allowing a single grain of rice to fall. Sing-cha (light tea without milk or sugar) would invariably be served, while eating The small bowl without handle, would go round from one person to another. After the thanks-giving-prayer, they would stroke their beard with the oily hands.

One of them would get the kapak, with freshly filled water and drawing a small quantity of yellow Yarkandi tobacco from a bag, put it in his left palm. Holding the kapak in the right hand, he would let a few drops of water fall on the tobacco from the hole, manipulating the drops with his index finger. Slowly, he would mix the golden tobacco in both the palms and put it into the top, which has a brass lid on hinges. Fetching a burnt out yak dung fire, from the kitchen and putting it on the tobacco, and closing the hole with the finger he would have several hard pulls on it, and pass it on to the

next person, after blowing out the last smoke through the hole.

My father had two such Yarkandi Hulla-bulla and acquaintances would bring him presents of tobacco which would compare favourable with the best Virginia brand.

When travelling they would eat only one heavy meal in a day, but a Yarkandi feast is lavish. I attended ~~too~~ two at Safa Kadal Sarai, in 1939 with Abdul Hamid Khan. When the Dustarkhan is spread in the afternoon it is not rolled up till dinner is over, several hours later,

COPIES OF TESTIMONIALS

Calcutta,
Dec. 29th 96

The bearer of this chit "Esa Tsaring" a Ladakhi came with Capt. We'lby and me across Tibet and China to Peking-always cheerful even when times were hard, and food scarce, he was quite invaluable. He is also, a most useful man as interpreter, having a great natural aptitude for picking up languages.

I can strongly recommend him to any one travelling in Central Asia or Tibet, as the harder the work, the better he does.

Neill malolm
93 High drs

2. 'Esa Tsaring' Ladakhi travelled with malcolm 93 Highldrs and self across Tibet and China this year.

He was a faithful and most useful servant throughout, always cheerful under the most adverse circumstances.

He can read and write Tibetan, load mules, cook—infact do almost anything, that is asked of him, and willingly too.

Were I to make another journey, I should do my best to take this man again as my servant. I can very strongly recommend him to anyone else.

He received as pay Rs. 20/- per month.

Lucknow

M. S. Wellby Capt.
18th Hussars.

3

LEH—An Entrepot of Central Asian Trade

Now that I have described Baba Kalam's role as a horse-broker, I would as well write something about the trade between India and Alte Shahar, (Land of the Six Cities) as the Turki themselves called their country of which Leh was the entrepot.

Of course, there was some trade between Central Asia and Ladakh, over the centuries prior to William Moorcroft's arrival in Leh, in 1820 It was carried by Turki them selves and some eterprising Kashmiri traders. But it was Moorcroft's dream in the 1820's to establish trading relations between Central Asia and the East India Company, in a big way. After the British took Punjab they gave serious thought towards the idea, to counter Russian threat and influence.

Moorcroft stayed in Ladakh for nearly 2 years waiting for the permission from the authorities in Central Asia, to enable him to proceed there to explore the possibilities. He had sent his able and faithful Munshi, Izzat Ullah to Central Asia to get the required permission.

While waiting in Ladakh the ever-active and keen observer Englishman, besides, himself proceeding to explore Nubra and sending Trebeck to Spiti, wrote briefly but very interestingly about some social aspects of the common Ladakhis, the aristocrats, and the king and his headstrong and diplomatic queen, his audienee with the small crown prince, and the Kalon (Prime Minister) etc.

About Ladakhi ladies he writes, 'A Ladakhi female in full costume would cause no small sensation among the fashionable

dames of a European Capital'. One hundred and sixty three years later (as I am writing these pages in June 1984) a troupe of Ladakhi performing artists, including 4 females flew from New Delhi, on May 26th for a tour of 5 European countries. They will dance and sing in 26 capitals and cities including Paris and Berlin. As a Ladakhi orchestra is accompanying them the auditoriums and performing halls of these cities wou'd resound with Ladakhi music, and the females with their breastful of dazzling jewellery and torquise-studded Pairaks (head gear) would surprise the dames of Europe. I am sure they would come up to Moorcroft's expectations.

I wish he had written more about these aspects but Moorcroft's priorities were trade and economic matters.

When the permission was refused, the party travelled to Kashmir and reaching Kunduz and Bukhara via Kabul, and purchasing quite a number of what we call the famous Badakshani horses, how tragic to think that the three men died under mysterious circumstances, on the way back to India. They remained on the march for nearly five years with long stays in Punjab, Ladakh and Kashmir.

The word has come a long way since Moorcroft's days. It took him full one year to reach Leh from Bareilly. Now you can reach it in one hour from Delhi, 5 times a week, breakfasting in the jet plane and looking down on the Rotang or Pir Panchal ranges, far down below.

If I have correctly followed the account of the British characters in the Central Asian Commercial Enterprise, as given by the able researcher and writer John Keay, in his books When Men and Mountains Meet, (Century Publishing's London) Johnson was the first British to reach Khotan in 1865, Shaw and Hayward at Yarkand in ~~1873 as the head of the Grand Mission.~~ 1868.

Coyley was the first British Joint Commissioner in Leh, in 1867. Dagleish was the second Briton, after Shaw, to be actually engaged in the trade.

The circumstances of the murder of Dagleish by the Afghan, Daud Mohammad; on the top of the Karakoram pass, at 19000 feet is described in some detail by John Keay in his book. It was a Ladakhi Argon, Shame-ud-Din, specially selected by Rai Bahadur, Pandit Radha Kishen, Wazir Wazarat, Leh and approved by Major H. Ramsay, the British Commissioner, who was sent to Sinkiang to take up the trail of the murder under captain H. Bower. Shams-ud-Din was able independently to track down Daud Mohammed in Samarkand, in Russian Turkistan, and in getting him arrested by the Russians, but the man committed suicide, while under arrest and the motive of the murder was never known. At a special ceremony in Leh held by Ramsay, Shams-ud-Din was given a sum of three thousand rupees sanctioned by the British Government, and a certificate was written by Ramsay from Murre in 1895 praising his service in this regard. (Ladakh—Echo of the unknown by Amarnath, 1931).

First, I shall give short descriptions of the land as given by a British in 1888, a German in 1914, and a Ladakhi who was there for nearly five years during 1936—1953.

Henry Lansdell who travelled through Sinkiang to Leh via Russia in 1888, writes in his book, Chinese Central Asia, that it is a vast area, stretching about 1500 miles from west to east and at its widest part measures 400 miles. It is as big as France and Austria put together with an area of about 465,000 square miles. Kashgar in the west and Yarkand in the east were the two main centres of trade. The Chinese renamed it as Sinkiang (New Province) after it was reconquered from Yakub Beg in 1877.

He valued Sinkiang's trade with Senirechia and Ferghana at 150,000 pounds during that year. From Badakshan they brought horses, pista chionuts and took back Nasha (probably Charas) gold and carpets. From India via Ladakh were brought cotton goods muslins, watches, jewellery and Mohammedan books and took back Nasha, gold, silver, wool carpets and felts. He noticed cloth manufactured by Macdonald of

Manchester. Further he writes that tea from India was forbidden which means that China had a monopoly in it. Anyway Turkis drank very little tea, as we saw in Ladakh. He even mentions about an Indian barber who was doing well and seemed contended.

2. On his return to Germany from Ladakh, Dr A.H. Francke, the well-known missionary scholar, was deputed by the Ethnological Museum of Munich, in 1914, on a Scientific mission to Sinkiang (to Takla Makan in particular) via Russia and Russian Turkistan. He was accompained by Koeber of Berlin. As related by Bishop La Trobe, in Moravian Magazines for 1915 and 1916. Francke gives a glowing description of the help and hospitality accorded to them by the Swedish missionaries, the Chinese Governor and Ambans, the British Resident, and the British Akskals in the land of the Six Cities.

The Swedish missionaries in Kashgar and Yarkand had been serving for a quarter of a century prior to his visit, which means they were there in 1889. We can therefore, conclude that on the whole Sinkiang was politically stable during those years. Sir George Macartney was the British Resident in Kashgar. Accompanied by one of the missionaries, Herr Bohlin, Francke called on the Chinese Governor, on the day of their arrival in Kashgar, and when the Governor carried in a planquin, and accompained by the Mayor and Chinese soldiers, returned the call, his arrival in the mission compound, was heralded by the booming of 2 gunfires.

The Governor invited him and the missionaries to a banquat of 16 courses, served in the palace garden, near a pond of lotus flowers.

The Aksakal of Karghalik came to receive him on horseback at the head of some Indian merchants in festive attire and looked after the comforts of their stay in the town. He says that the Akskal was a Ladakhi and spoke to him in Tibetan. He must have been Abdul Hamid Khan of the Haider Shah family of Leh. The two Muslim aristocrat families—

Haider Shah and Nasar Shah, were well known beyond Ladakh. While the members of the former turned their attention towards Sinkiang, the latter traded with Lhasa in a big way. Abdul Hamid Khan who served for many years as British Akskal in Yarkand and may be in Kargalik was conferred the title of Khan Bahadur, which was second only to Knighthood in the British Indian Empire of those days. Gulam Rasul of the Nasar Shah family also received the same title, mainly for rendering assistance to the well-known explorer Sven Heiden.

Francke makes mention of a Persian merchant and carpet manufacturer in Khotan who helped him. From his description Sinkiang appears to be a happy and a prosperous land.

Francke was surprised to meet Lobzang, a Christian of Leh and Galwan Rasul at Suget Karaul in the entourage of Dr. Fillipi. He felt sad to learn from Fillipi that First World War had broken out in Europe.

3. According to Aziz Din it is 29 days journey on foot or horse back from Leh to Yarkand (525 miles) as detailed below—

1.	Leh to Panamik Nubra	4 days
2.	Panamik to Saser	2 days
3.	Saser to Chongthash	1 day
4.	Chongthash to Morgo	1 day
5.	Morgo to Depsang	2 days
6.	Depsang to Korakoram	2 days
7.	Korakoram to Suget Karol	5 days
8..	Karol to Shaidulla	1 day
9.	Shaidulla to Sanju	5 days
10.	Sanju to Karghalik	4 days
11.	Karghalik to Yarkand	2 days
		29 days
	Yarkand to Kashgar	4 days

He went twice, and stayed there for 5 years. He saw the cairn on this side of the Korakoram where Dagleish was murdered. The Indian Consulate in Kashgar was located in the Cheeni Bagh and Thompson Glover was the consul. When he went there the first time, most of Sinkiang was under the Tungans (Chinese Muslims). There were about 100 Indians in Sinkiang in 1936. He along with Mohammad Khan were working in the Consulate as peons or orderlies. According to the latter there were many kinds of fruit trees and most of the fruit rotted for want of eaters in the Consulate garden. Drinking water in Kashgar during two winter months was somewhat of a problem. People fetched it from tanks which were not clean.

Rainfall was scanty and fields were irrigated by river water through canals. Wherever irrigation was possible yields from the land was rich and plentiful, wheat, rice, maize were sown and in most cases the yield were upto 25 folds. Melons and different kinds of fruit were plentiful. Cotton and hemp were commercial crops. Two crops were harvested and lucerane was reaped 4 times in a year. In short, it was a prosperous land.

After independence, India maintained its Consulate in Kashgar upto November, 1953, when the whole staff comprising 22 members left for Ladakh. They were the last caravan to cross into India.

There were two caravan Sarais (inns) in Leh for the accommodation of the Central Asian Turki traders and Haj pilgrims, probably got constructed by Mr. Johnson, the Governor of Kashmir Maharaja from 1882 to 1890. The bigger one was located where the police station is built now. In the upper part of the premises there was a double-storeyed 'L' shaped building. Each of the ground floor room had a small varandha with two mud-brick plastered plat forms and the Turkis traders would spread their namdas, carpets and lightly-cotton-padded matresses with velvet covers. They lived comfortably even when travelling.

I often used to go there with my friend Alla Ullah whose grand uncle, Kh. Abdullah Shah was the Akskal.

There was a big platform made of sundried bricks and plastered, in the middle of the compound where the Aksakal and his clerk would be seated on carpets under the shade of the poplar trees. He would meet the Yarkandis there.

A British Consulate was opened in Kashgar in 1890 and in due course Aksakals were appointed in Yarkand, Kargalik, Guma in Sinkiang and in Leh and Srinagar. (Aksakal in Turki means white Beard, i.e. an elderly respectable officer) It is safe to assume that by the beginning of the present century, there was a considerable flow of trade between Sinkiang and Punjab through Leh. And during the 30 years from about 1927 to 1947. when I saw and remember, it was in full swing.

THE TREATY ROAD

The trade road between Leh and Machoi (nearly at the top of the Zojila) was known as the Treary Road as a result of a treaty between the Kashmir State and British India. The British joint Commissioner (known as Assistant Resident in Srinagar) was responsible for the construction and maintance of the 14 Dak bungalows and 14 Sarais (rooms and stables for the animals). Any traveller could stay in the Sarai free of charge, but a room in the Dak Bungalow would cost one rupee for 24 hours. There was a paid local Chowkidar to look after both the buildings. He was a very helpful man for arranging petty things between the travellers on one hand, and the Res-men and the villagers on the other.

There were two Road Overseers. Munshi Ali Hussain was one of the well known Overseers about whom I had heard. At several places on the roadside he had inscribed on a rock or a slab of stone the date of construction of that particular stretch of road and his own name and date.

While studying in Srinagar, once in 2 years, my friend Daniel Dana and I would go to Leh on horse-back, which would take us 12 or 13 days. We would dismount to read these incriptions. I believe one such inscription, in Urdu is still there, in the Lama Yuru gorge which used to be the main road before the construction of the vehicular road.

THE RES SYSTEM

Between Dras and Leh at every stage ponies would be available at the rate of one anna per mile. At this rate it would cost a traveller 15/- rupees for a pony from Leh to Srinagar—240 miles.

This arrangement for the supply of ponies and coolies to travellers was known as the Res or Begar system. 'Res' in Bodhi means 'by turn'. In practice it would mean that all the surrounding villages, in turn, would be responsible for supplying a fixed number of ponies at a particular stage. The maximum number of 50 ponies would be available only when the Joint Commissioners would be travelling. On other days, 15 to 20 ponies would always be there, at every stage, during Summer months. Take the example of Nemo village which was the first stage on the Treaty Road from Leh. A man and a pony from every main house (Khang-Chen) from the neighbouring villages of Nye and Bazgo, Nemo itself and Phiang, in turn, had to remain on duty at Nemo Sarai, with rations for himself and the pony, for one month, every 4 months. In one year it would be three months of Begar duty, away from home. However, by mutual and unofficial agreement only a dozen or so, would actually be there during winter months.

Government officials travelling on duty. British army officers coming to Ladakh for hunting and Haj pilgrims would also avail themselves of the facility of Res ponies. The traders would usually send their goods from Leh to Srinagar direct with ponywallas known as Kira-Kash, belonging to Kargil and Dras areas. It would be cheaper from 5 to 8 rupees per pony.

Amongst the Chowkidars I remember were Ata Rahim of Bodh Kharbu, Phuntsog of Lamayuru and Tsewang of Nurla. Ata Rahim was something of a personality and he would address us as 'Bu' (son) in a condescending way.

On his annual visit, usually in June, the British Commissioner with his 2 clerks, several Ladakhis peons (with their family members) headed by a Jamadar would travel one stage a day, with an additional stay at Spituk—only 8 kilometres from Leh. Thus, it would take the Commissioner's party 15 or 16 days to reach Leh from Srinagar. A number of prominent citizens, the Tehsildar, the Charas officer, his head-clerk, the Zaildar and several big Yarkandi merchants would go on horse-back to say their 'Salam' to the Commissioner at Spituk, and again on the following morning to bring him to the Residency, in a procession, through the Leh Bazar which would be gaily decorated with welcome archways. Near the Balkang gate, a contingent of 30-40 sepoys of the State Government with a Jamadar, holding a drawn sword, would Present Arms. He would inspect the two rows of soldiers and a little further on, Master Sultan, the Drill Master of the Govt. Middle School would say General Salute, Present Arms, and the boys standing in two lines on either side of the Bazar, would put their sticks forward, in both hands, followed by three cheers for the Commissioner.

About the middle of the bazar, the musicians and the professional lady-dancers would give the Joint Commissioner the traditional welcome. Preceded by the school band and followed by the spectators (kicking a lot of dust) he would enter the Recidency. Sitting on chairs on the porch with his head-clerk, Munshi Mohammad Din, (later made Khan Sahib) the Tehsildar and some other officers, he would watch a dance or two and the crowd would disperse.

The school boys would get a present of ten rupees and we would eagerly look forward to the picnic day with the money.

These procedures were repeated when the State Join

Commissioner (Wazir Wazarat) came for 6 months' stay, from Skardo in Baltistan.

The British Commissioner after a day or two of rest would inspect the Dak Bungalow and the 2 Sarais and order repairs, where necessary. A delegation of Yarkandis would meet him at the Residency and he would listen to their petitions, in a sort of 3 way channel—in Turki to the Aksakal. who would translate it to the Khan Sahib in Urdu, and he in English to the Commissioner.

The two Commissioners would discuss problems pertaining to trade whenever necessary, which I think was very rare.

Some time in August, the Commissioner would give his big tea party and the Tamasha which would be arranged by the Charas Office staff, under the overall direction of the Khan Sahib. This and the State Commissioner's party would be great events in summer for the mirth-loving Ladakhis.

The State Commissioner, on the other hand, was responsible through the Tehsildar and his subordinates including the police force of about a dozen constables, under the Head Constable, to look after the proper functioning of the Res system of men and ponies, on the Treaty Road. The police constable had no uniform but only a broad black leather belt, with a brass plate which he would wear over the sash of his Ladakhi dress. This force would maintain law and order in an area, I think twice the size of the Kashmir Valley.

The other function was to supply to the Yarkandies as much barley grain from the State grannaries located at Leh, Saspol and Lamayuru as they required, for their horses, at fixed rate. (For many years Baba Kalam's elder son was Incharge of the Lama Yuru grannary). The farmers of Ladakh were required to pay part of their land tax in grain, and deposit them at those places. The Aksakal at Leh was the representative of the British Commissioner to look after the needs of the Yarkandis and settle their disputes,

The two Sarai keepers at Leh, and the 14 others on the Treaty Road, and the 2 Road Overseers were also under the British Commissioner and paid by him.

The Aksakal usually had a clerk whom he paid from his own pocket. I do not think the clerk kept any official records pertaining to the Yarkands but he assisted the Aksakal in other matter such as settling the disputes among the Yarkandies themselves, and between the Yarkandis and the Ladakhis.

The Aksakals I knew were Galwan Rasul, Bahu-ud-Din Khan (one of his grandsons, Afzal Turki is now settled in England) and Khwaja Abdullah Shah. My father Jonathan Tharchin was the last Aksakal, after his retirement from the Charas office.

THE YARKANDIS

Now something about the people of Sinkiang or Eastern Central Asia who came to Leh. I would call them Yarkandis although they came from other parts as well. A Ladakhi would generally address a Yarkandi either as a Khoja or a Haji. Those who dealt in the trade, can be classified in two categories—the traders and the caravan men. The latter carried the goods on their pack animals mostly on big Yarkandi horses on payment, from Sinkiang to Leh and back.

The top class amongst the traders were known as Bias, (millionnaire) in their language. Hussain Haji of Khotan would come in this category, others like Mohammad Omar Khan and Khan Bahadur Nur Mohammad Khan were from Peshawar and Persia respectively. A caravan would consist of 30 to 40 horses with a Caravan Bash (leader) and 5 to 8 servants, known as Chakars—5 horses under one servant. A pack animal would carry a load of two and half maunds (92 kilograms)—the maximum weight fixed by convention. 4 caravans of say 150 horses would bring 300 packed loads which would be staked in 2 or 3 tiers in the upper compound of the Sarai, in a compact way. 150 horses, I think would be the maximum number the stables of the Sarai would accommodate. Horse dung of 150 horses would mean about 100 basketfuls of fuel per day which in a cold and a firewood deficit place like

Leh was a thing to be welcomed. Many people would request the Akskal to allow them to collect the dung for a day or two.

The other category of Yarkandis who would reach Leh were the Haj pilgrims on their way to Mecca. They would come in small groups. Sometimes there would be women and children in a group. Each person would have his own horse and all his belongings—clothes bedding, edibles, some petty items of trade and some grain-feed for the horses, all stuffed in a big saddle-bag, would be loaded on the animal, and himself or herself on the top of it. But they would also have to carry several things less bulky but high in value such as gold and silver bars and coins, to cover the expense of the long journey to Mecca.

As Muslims follow a lunar calendar the day of pilgrimage would fall sometimes in summer and some years in winter, in rotation. Many of those pilgrims who would reach Leh late in the season and had little experience of the road would fall victims to the high mountain passes of Karakoram, Saser, Khardong and Zojila.

TRADE

From the Indian side the traders were mostly Hindus from Hoshiarpur in Panjab. There were a few Kashmiris such as Ahmad Shahdad and Qazi Brothers of Srinagar who would mainly purchase small-sized Namdas (felt) in Leh, get them dyed and embroidered in Srinagar, and export them to foreign countries.

Except for Najaf Shah Khan and Akhon Juma, I do not know any other Ladakhi who dealt in the Central Asian Trade in a worth-mentioning way. Ladakhis were too poor and not business-minded in those days. A few Ladakhis such as Issa Ali of Chushod who owned a considerable number of horses would join a Yarkandi caravan, and also carry some goods of their own.

Lala Dogar Mal, Shadi Lal Sud, Dina Nath, Bishembar Das, Biharilal, Rulia Ram, Het Ram, Bansi Lal and Rai Sahib, Gori Mal Gohal were some of the leading Panjabi traders. The last one served as Akskal in Sinkiang during

the early 1900s. Some of the Panjabis were more or less permanently settled, and a few were married in Sinkiang.

IMPORTS

I think Charas (Hashish) was the biggest single item of import from Sinkiang. I will describe it in more detail later on. Next was raw-silk thread, namdas, carpets, cured lamb skins, manufactured silk cloth including some multi-coloured ones, (which are even now worn by women of Tashkant, as seen in pictures), dust and small bars of gold, Chinese silver coins called Aktanga (because they contained less alloy to make jewelleries) Jade cups, some Russian velvets and long boots, and dried fruits, silver bullion shaped like a hoof of a donkey, etc.

Items mainly meant for Ladakhi customers were rough cotton cloth and some silk cloth, ready-made garments, mostly cotton-padded, long shoes called Charoks, saddlery items, some horses, donkeys and sheep, warm sheep-skin garments, and big cotton bags and saddle bags. Many Ladakhis in those days kept Yarkandi horses.

It is interesting to note that Yarkandis could manufacture big carpets—some of the carpets donated by Bais for the Leh mosque must be about 20 × 10 feet, weighing more than 90 kilos, but they could only manufacture cotton or silk cloth of about 1 foot in width, Evidently they did not have flying shuttle looms.

We should not forget that Yarkand and Kashgar were themselves centres of trade for other neighbouring parts of mainland China, Russian Turkistan and Badakshan etc. Therefore, in addition to the things produced in Sinkiang itself, other items, like silver from China, and gold from Russia figured in the trade with India.

According to S.H. Godfrey, imports from Central Asia in 1886 was worth 1652,413 rupees and export worth 1232,229 rupees, total Rs. 2884,642. These figures were obtained from the British Joint Commissioner's Office in Leh.

During the first World War trade must have slackened, but again picked up after 1920. According to G.L. Kaul, it was

93 lakhs in 1920. It reached its peak during the mid 1930s, and supposing a modest increase of 10 lakh rupees, we can safely say the total value of exports and imports in 1935 would have been about 10 million (One crore rupees), which was a big sum in those days. (When I was appointed as a teacher in 1940 after my graduation, I received a starting pay of Rs. 29/- ; but money had its value and one and a quarter rupees worth of rice would feed a man, for a whole month in Kashmir.

The Second World War started in 1939 and import of foreign goods such as dyes, cloth etc. stopped as England, Germany and Japan were all involved in the War. Also political conditions in Sinkiang were not stable, therefore, Panjabi Hindu traders stopped going there from 1939. As they held the monopoly, import of Charas also stopped. In a letter dated, Feb. 4, 1940, father expressed concern over it. However, Caravans continued coming upto 1946, and a few even after. They sold or bartered their goods in Leh.

I was in Jammu in 1944. In a letter dated January 30, 1944, a friend wrote that Leh had an exciting time in the autumn of the previous year when a caravan of 600 horses arrived there. It must have been the biggest single Caravan for all times, to reach Leh. But it was not a trade Caravan. It was a Caravan sent by the authorities in Sinkiang to take rubber tyres for trucks, supplied by the Allies to Chiang Kai Shek.

The last Caravan to cross the Karakoram into India, as mentioned before, was the one which brought the members of the Indian Consul, in November, 1953. Mr. Sethi Mehta, Aziz Din and Mohammad Khan were among them.

Bihari Lal who was the last Hindu trader still in Sinkiang, also accompanied them.

EXPORT

Exports from India were chemical dyes of all colours, in small tins, mostly German made, indigo, medicinal herbs and other ingredients, artificial silk cloths (mostly Japanese) muslin, velvet and cotton cloths, some kinds of spices, crystal sugar, ottor fur and Kiryana, which would include such

things as mirrors beads, sewing machine needles, certain kinds of cosmetics, dry battery cells, some western medicines, sun glass, threads and many other small manufactured goods, mostly Japanese, and religious books.

INVOICE GOODS

Central Asian Traders would get their foreign goods such as dyes, cloth etc. either direct from Bombay, the port of landing, or from Amritsar from whole-sale dealers and send them to Srinagar in big packages, through their commission agents. Take, as an example, Lala Nand Lal of Hoshiarpur, who trades with Sinkiang through his two employees, Bishambar Das and his son Dina Nath. They were called Gumashtas. Nand Lal sends 50 maunds of Invoice goods to Srinagar, where Dina Nath is waiting for them in the Yarkandi Sarai, at Safakadal. When the goods and papers pertaining to Customs duties are received, he repacks the goods into smaller bundles, each weighing one maund and ten seers, because as already stated, the maximum pony load is 2½ maunds (92 kilograms). He sends, these 50 bundles of invoice goods on 20 ponies and himself proceeds to Leh on the Res ponies, described earlier.

When he reaches Leh, he goes to the Charas Officer to inform that he would be leaving for Yarkand soon, with 80 bundles of Invoiced goods. He is a friend of my father and they are glad to see each other.

In the meantime, a caravan of 20 horses has arrived from Sinkiang and Dina Nath negotiates with the Caravan Bash to carry his goods to Yarkand, after a week. It is the month of August and the Bash has purchased two big lucerene fields at Skara in Leh, and his 15 horses are grazing there. He has left his remaining 5 horses and 4 donkeys on the other side of the Khardong in Nubra (the 4 donkeys had carried corn and other feed-grains for the horses). These animals had grown weak and some had back sores. Crossing the eighteen thousand feet Khardong and recrossing it, would make them still weaker and he thought it advisable to leave them with an acquintance, in

the village of Hunder where Lucerene and fodder is cheaper than in Leh. The 10 loads of raw silk were sent to Leh, on hired ponies or yaks.

One or two days before departure for Sinkiang Dina Nath goes to the Charas Officer again to inform that the Caravan is ready and they would be leaving on 28th of August. He is accompained by Bishember Nath who runs a shop in Leh. Dina Nath requests the Charas Officer and my father, to issue the required certificate to Bishembar Das soon. Father after ascertaining from the North Gate clerk that the goods have left for Sinkiang, issues the certificate to Bishember Das. He sends it to Nand Lal at Hoshiarpur who in due course, collects from the concerned authorities, the amount of custom duty back. Such foreign made goods which were actually exported to Central Asia were known as Invoice or Custom bound goods. This concession was meant to encourage trade with Central Asia.

From what I have seen and heard I would dare to follow the journey of Dina Nath and the Caravan to Yarkand. Dina Nath being an orthodox Hindu, carries his pots and pans as he would be doing his own cooking, during the journey.

The Caravan Bash has provided Dina Nath a Yak to ride on the High Khardong Pass. As stated earlier, the Bash has left 5 of his horses in Nubra, therefore, he would require 6 Yaks to transport the 10 bundles of Dina Nath upto Panamik. So he has hired 6 yaks.

There is nothing like a ride on the sure-footed yak, lead by the owner, by its nose string. The pace is slow but steady. Near the top it is windy so Dina Nath puts on his eye goggles and takes 2 Asprin tablets as he feels a headche. It is what we call mountain sickness. As the sun sets, they reach Khardong village on the other side of the mountain.

Crossing the Shyok river at Koyak in Nubra is another hazard on the way to Yarkand. (If there was a bridge it must

have been washed away by the mighty Khomdan flood sometime during the late 1920s.

A suspension bridge was constructed there after, 1933. The goods and the men of the caravan are ferried across in the two big boats, but the horses would have to be forded. Fortunately, the river is not swollen otherwise it could have been dangerous for the horses.

At Panamik the caravan makes, a halt for 2 or 3 days to rest and make final preparations for the long and bleak journey ahead. Each of the servants would mend the saddlery etc. of the 5 horses under his charge and with the help of another man examine all the hoofs of the horses. If a shoe is missing, he would shod a new one with six nails. The hoof would first be placed on a small wooden board and with a big file he would file away some parts, here and there. The assistent would now lift and hold the leg on his knee. With a sharp-edged instrument he would chip away small pieces to fit the horse-shoe well. Then with his small hammer he would drive in the nails in the holes, at a slightly oblique angle, so that the nails would come out of the hoof in the middle. The ends of the nails would be cut away with another instrument. The horse would now have a new shoe.

When a camping site is reached, after unloading, the horses would be tied in pairs in opposite directions—one's head and the other's tail, to ensure that they do not stray away and drink water which sometimes make them sick. When the perspired body is dry, each horse is fed barley grain in a goat-hair bag called Tobra, with its muzzle in it. As there is no human habitation after Panamik till the Caravan reaches Suget Karol on the other side of the Korakoram, the horses are mainly fed on grain. Even if there are some pastures, unlike the Ladakhi pony, the Yarkandi horses are not used to grazing when the grass is poor.

In four days they reach the Depsang pleatue, which is quite a big expanse of flat ground. The 2 days' ascent to the Korakoram is so gradual that when you reach the foot of the

pass, you are rather surprised that the final ascent is not more than about 1000 feet but on the top of the pass at 19,000 feet, you see range after range of mountains on all sides, under your feet. Francke also says the final ascent from the other side, is about 2000 feet.

After 12 days' march from Suget Karol, Dina Nath reaches the Hindu Sarai in Yarkand. The town of Yarkand is rather disappointing, as far as the buildings and bazars are concerned. Lansdell describes them as wretched mud-brick houses ; this impression is attested by the photographs given in the Magazine, mentioned earlier. Tsering Pnuntsog says some of the Yarkandis were greatly impressed by the 9 storeyed palace in Leh. Dina Nath is welcomed by another Panjabi employee of his master who stays there more or less permanently, to look after the trade—mainly to collect Charas, which constitutes the main item of their export to India. He has purchased, in small quantities, the narcotic drug from farmers, graded them into three qualities, got them processed and packed them in strong donkey hides, oblong in shape, each bundle weighing more or less one maund and ten seers. The processed Charas is rather a sticky brownish substance with a peculiar smell.

The number of bundles collected in Yarkand is 6. Dina Nath purchases 4 more bundles at Karghalik which grows more Charas hemp than anywhere else in Sinkiang, to make the total 10 for 5 horses. Also he is taking 22 horse-loads of raw silk thread, and carpets.

By June, 1936 he is ready to leave for Leh with a caravan of 20 horses. He got a quilt of good cotton made for my father, as requested by him in his letter posted on Dec. 4, 1935. He has written the name of the owner viz. Nand Lal and also the weight, on each bundle in bold letters in Urdu.

At Panamik, the Charas clerk inspects the 10 bundles and issues a chit. Reaching Leh, while Dina Nath gets all the details of his goods entered in the register by the North Gate Munshi, his father Bishembar Das and the Caravan men take

the Charas bundles direct to the Charas office premises, and unload them there.

The Charas office was located next to the Moravian Church and across the upper Sarai lane. It had a two room office, a huge multipillared godown with a big door of strong iron bars and a spacious compound. The staff comprised the Charas officer, two clerks, a weigh-man (Baba Gulam) 4 peons and a Chowkidar. The office was probably opened during the early years of this century.

Considering the value and liable abuses, and possible theft of this narcotic drug, it was controlled by the Panjab Government through the British Commissioner.

The Charas officer would order my father to inspect the 10 bundles of Dina Nath. If any bundle is found damaged he would get it mended by grafting fresh patches of sheep skin by semi-skilled coolies, at the expense of Dina Nath.

Each bundle would be weighed by the Charas Weigh-Man, in the big wooden pans attached with iron chains to the tri-poled scale. All the bundles would now remain stored in the godown.

The 10 bundles of Charas would ultimately reach Hoshiarpur where they would be stored in a government warehouse.

Nand Lal would sell a bundle to a licensed dealer in the narcotic who would pay the cost to the owner but the custom duty to the Government which according to Shadi Lal Gohal, whom I interviewed, would amount to more than a 1000/-rupees.

From 1920 onwards the Charas Officers deputed from Punjab were Byramji (a Parsi), Khan Bahadur Ghulam Mohammad, Mian Amir-ud-Din, Khan Bahadur Ashraf Khan and Mr. Gautama.

This is the story of Charas.

There were two Munshis (clerks) at the North and the South gates, in Leh and the traders or their agents or the pony-owners were required to give them the details of the merchandise. The two Munshis submitted a date-wise monthly report, on full scape sheets of paper, in red and blue ink, to the Charas office which maintained the record of all trade passing through Leh to Central Asia and coming down from there, in addition to its own work.

Father would sometimes bring his register and the reports home, during busy summer months, and I as a student, and Baba Ghulam, the Charas weighman, would help him in his work, each holding one of the reports.

As goods had to be recorded in the register date-wise, I would say, for example, Ist September, 1928, 14 bundles of raw silk thread from Sinkiang belonging to Karim Haji, through Sabir Akhoon Caravan Bash, and he would enter it on the appropriate page and column of the register, and I would tick the item. Now Baba Gulam, holding the South Gate report would say 1st September, 1928, 8 bundles raw silk thread, belonging to Rullia Ram, left for Punjab via Kulu/ Srinagar, and he would tick the item with a pencil.

In this way all the items of import and export would be entered in the black-bound trade register. Later, father would prepare a consolidated six-monthly statement and submit it to the British Joint Commissioner. If these trade registers are still there somewhere, the volume of trade during a year could be known.

In between the entries, father would ask me to get a 'Tamak' and I would do it in the same way as earlier described in the story of Baba Kalam, but the hubble-bubble would not be a portable Kapak but a bigger Indian one, which could stand on the floor independently. When the paper work was finished they would play a few games of Chess, and the weigh-man would more often beat the Headclerk.

BENEFITS TO LADAKH

The main beneficiaries of the Central Asian Trade were the merchants and horse owners of that country on that side, and

the Panjabis and some Kashmiris on this side. However, many Ladakhis, even the common farmers were benefitted in the following ways :—

1. The farmers who possessed lucerene fields in Leh and surrounding villages like Stok, Matsho, Shey, Spituk and Chuchot etc. The Caravan Bash would purchase the standing lucerene and take his horses to graze there. He would pay the owners well.

2. Those farmers possessing yaks would transport a considerable number of loads from Panamik to Leh and vice versa on payment.

3. Other Ladakhis would sell them hay, dried lucerene and some vegetables. They would carry these things on their back in a basket and keep standing in the bazar, or make a round of the two sarais to find a customer.

4. Several restaurant owners who served Yarkandi food would make some profit. There is still a Ladakhi Muslim family known as Khuda Bardi. 'Berde' in Turki means 'to give'. One of their ancestors was a kind-hearted man and served a poor Haji or a Chakar food, free of charge, and he prayed 'Khuda Berde'—'May God give you'. Their descendents are still doing good business, though now with the change in times, they have switched over to baking bread, popularly known as *Double Roti*.

Lastly, pony owners from Kargil and Dras areas would earn considerable money for transporting goods from Leh to Srinagar and Indian goods from there to Leh. These people were known as Kira-Kash.

During summer months, some merchants with their ponies, and mules would come to Leh via the Kulu-Kyelang route over the Rotang and Para-latse. They would exchange their goods and carry Yarkandi goods back.

Two Yarkandi items of dress have found permanent place in Ladakhi-folk songs :—they are Pichak Tungyu and Kosa Masi—the conch-handled knife (Pichak in Turki means knife)

and the long calf leather footwear, with separate pair of slippers, made of leather In our folk songs these two would constitute an ideal Ladakhi youth's items of dress, particularly of a Nyopa of a bridegroom's party.

The footwear has a special use and significance for Muslims because when once worn in the morning after washing the feet, you need not wash them for the remaining four prayers of the day. Of course, you have to put off the slippers outside the door. I think, they were specifically made for this purpose. And while travelling on horse-back you can pack the slippers and wear a half-size Charok instead, over it. Worn, together, they are warm and provide good protection to your feet and legs.

The Yarkandis have left a legacy to Kashmiris as well. The Kashmiris have learnt from them the art of Namda making. The Yarkandi Sarai, at Safa-Kadal is still standing.

YARKANDIS WHO WERE LEFT IN KASHMIR WHEN THE ROAD CLOSED

When the Central Asian trade closed in 1947, many Yarkandis were caught on this side of the Korakoram. Some were taken unaware, a few were on their way back from Haj pilgrimage, and quite a number of them could not go back because their goods were lying in Leh or Srinagar. And I think, they thought it prudent to stay on this side as political conditions were unstable in Sinkiang. It was particularly dangerous for rich people. Karim Haji Lakman, and Husain Haji and Tokhta-Niaz were some whom I knew. The former two were good businessmen, Hussain Haji was a short-statured man Several hundred bundles of his invoiced goods, remained stored in the Charas godown, for a number of years Subsequently they were released to him and he opened a shop in Srinagar to sell these goods. Lakman died in Srinagar recently. Toktah Niaz Haji is settled in Kargil and Sadir Akhon in Leh. All the Yarkandis in Srinagar were housed in the Safa Kadal Sarai and they made a living by making caps, quilts, curing skins and furs and dealing in fur trade.

As they could not get Kashmir citizenship, they, through their Association, headed by Haji Mohammad Kasim, corresponded with the Government of Turkey and succeeded in getting its consent to accept them as Turk citizens. The Govt. of Turkey sponsored their air travel in groups comprising about 300 men, women and children in all, in the course of about 10 years. The last Yarkandi to leave for Turkey was Yasin Qari in 1983. When Tadzin and I went to Safa Kadal, in June 1984, we were surprised and disappointed not to find a single Yarkandi, in the Sarai. I am told that they are doing well in Turkey.

Webster in his History of Mediaeval and Modern History writes as follows :

"The first appearance of the Ottoman Turks in history dates from 1227, the year of Jenghis Khan's death. In that year a small Turkish horde driven west-ward from their Central Asian homes by the Mongol advance, settled in Asia Minor. There they enjoyed the protection of their kinsmen, the Seljuk Turks and from them accepted Islam."

The three sons of Khan Bahadur Noor Mohammad Khan who in the four decades of this century traded with Sinkiang, in a big way. both via Leh and Gilgit are now settled in Srinagar. It was their grand-father from Kabul who went to Sinkiang for business. We had tea with them and saw the photograph of their father with the medal. Mian Abdul Rehman was a Pathan from Peshawar who settled in Sinkiang and carried a flourishing trade before 1939. It was this proud and hot-tempered Pathan who fearlessly protested with the authorities in Sinkiang when all foreigners were ordered to leave that year. It was he who obtained sufficient time and facilities for the long and hazardous journey for the foreigners and their families over another range of the Karakoram through the Khunjarab Pass into Hunza and Gilgit, late in the season. These unfortunate people had to leave all their landed and other properties in the country of Six Cities.

The proud Mian built a house in Srinagar and carried a

fairly good business in furs but kept his family socially isolated. Earlier in 1939, 20 bundles of his raw silk had reached Leh and he had to sell them. That was the main reason why he had to stay in Srinagar.

REFUGEES

The first refugees whom I remember, were several families from Persia who passed through Leh to Sinkiang, probably in 1927. I guess, they went to Sinkiang to settle there, so they cannot strictly be called refugees.

2. The second group which came from Sinkiang or Russian Turkistan or may be from Russia itself, were several families of white Russians, in 1931 or 1932. They remained in Srinagar for sometime. One of the men came to our hostel, at Sheikh Bagh to give lessons in violin to some ex-students of the Biscoe School. I do not know their number, why they came, and where they settled ultimately.

3. The next one also came from Sinkiang in 1935 and Ladakhis called them Tungans (Chinese Muslims) but most of them were Turki soldiers. There were factional fightings in Sinkiang again and a defeated faction, along with their army leader, Ma-Si-Jung came to seek refuge in India. They mostly came from Northern Sinkiang near Urimchi, the capital. Lu-Jang and Thung Jang were other two officers. According to Munshi Nabi, who was the local clerk dealing with Tungan Affairs in Leh, their total number was about 300. They came with their arms and trained horses, the arms were confiscated by the State authorities on arrival in Leh Among other things, they brought gold, in dust form, in bullion, and Russian gold coins and also silver bars and some fine special kinds of Chinese rugs. Some Ladakhis still have these rugs.

Lastly came, what the Ladakhis called 'King of Hor'. I do not know where they were settled in India.

In summer 1937, I happened to be in Leh on holiday. Along with other Ladakhis students, when I returned to Srinagar in November, there was an early snowfall and

some refugees and Haj pilgrims were detained at Machoi Sarai, almost on the top of Zojila. We travelled together upto Ganderbal. When we told them that there was an Octroi post at Soura near Srinagar and they may be searched they requested us to take care of their gold, mostly ornaments in small cloth bags. We agreed and handed them back the next day at Safakadal Sarai.

In 1941, came what the Ladakhis called the Kazaks. They could not strictly be called refugees because they came like conquerors rather than refugees. Ladakhis do not know from which part of China they came from, they did not belong to Sinkiang nor did they come via the Korakoram, but ethnically they were Turkis for they spoke the Turki language and more or less dressed like them. Some say, they plundered certain parts of Eastern Tibet around Kalias for more than two years before reaching Changthang in Ladakh. They numbered several thousand and the Ladakh constibulary of a dozen unarmed policemen was not considered enough to cope with them, therefore the auth rities at Srinagar sent Major Abdul Hamid of the State force to Leh.

When the Tehsildar who was the highest and the only permanently stationed gazetted officer in Leh, in those days, sent some revenue officials to the State border to see that the Kazaks behaved properly within the State territory. It must be said to their credit that we did not hear of any mis-behaviour on their part when they met the State officials. But they had done enough plundering earlier, not sparing even the monasteries. Some of the things they sold to the Ladakhis were articles used in religious rituals in the Gonpas. I bought a Tsukdan rug which is mostly used by lamas. I also purchased from them a horse for 20 rupees. I thought I made a good bargain but later on as more groups of Kazaks arrived, a better and a stronger pony could be purchased for five rupees. And sheep were sold for a few loaves of broad. Many Ladakhis went to Shey, Akling Choklamsar and Spituk with bags of hay and loaves of bread and brought yaks, sheep and horses home instead. I am sure, Ladakhis from Sakti to Kargil never ate so much mutton and yak beef as they did in

1941. On the way to Ladakh, the Kazaks had robbed the Tibetans and Changpa nomads not only of their few possessions but their sheep and cattle also. They simply drove them along with their herds. For want of enough grazing and fodder the cattle and grown weak therefore, we got them so cheap. We went for a school picnic and about 100 teachers and students slaughtered 6 sheep on that day.

In retrospect, I think the immigrants from the North which we read in history books could not have been much different from the ones we saw that year. How generous India had been over the centuries to shelter so many refugees of different nationalities.

5. Mohammad Khan is a refugee in his own country. His mother was a Turki lady but his father a Kashmiri. In Jammu and Kashmir, a state subject certificate can be got only on the basis of one's paternal and not maternal descent. So Mohammad Khan is a state subject. However, what he needs at present is not a state subject certificate but a pension from the Centre or State Government. He is entitled to it because he has served as an orderly, for many years prior to 1947 in the British Consulate in Kasgar and for more than 6 years for Independent India. When the Consulate was closed in 1953, he left his motherland and opted for his fatherland and accompanied Mr. Sethi and other members of the Consulate staff and crossed the Korakoram into Indian territory. The Government should have provided him with an alternative job in India, or at leasc a small pension when the Kashgar Consulate was closed. It is an irony of fate that he got neither, a citizenship nor a pension.

If you happen to go to the Hill Top Restaurant in the main bazar in Leh, you will find a man with his few wares spread out on a blanket on the broad passage on the ground floor of the building. He is Mohammad Khan. Every day he brings his wares in a tin box and puts them back in the evening and carries the box to a shopkeeper outside, in this way he makes a bare living for himself and his daughter by

his Ladakhi wife. Few men deserve an old age pension more than Mohammad Khan.

He is 65 and a cataract is covering one of his eyes.

The Last British Joint Commissioner was Major Ladlow. For some reasons, which I don't know, Ladlow ordered father who was working as Akaskal, after retirement from the Charas Office, to go to Gangles at the foot of the Khardong Pass, to check the Caravans. He was camping there.

On August, 11, 1946, Uncle Yoseb Gargan, the Bible translator passed away, and I had to go to the Residency to request the Commissioner to allow father to come down to Leh the next day for the funeral. Major Ladlow was sitting in the Drawing room and the peon on duty showed me in. He asked me to take a chair. I introduced myself and told him the purpose of my visit. He told me to wait and gave a note, asking father to come to Leh for the funeral on the following day, and go back to Gangles in the evening.

Next year father receiveda letter from the Commissioner to send important office records and also the porcelain and silver wares of the Leh Residency to Srinagar. I had to accompany him to the Residency for several days to help him to sort out the 'importants'. We packed them in 14 boxes and cases, and sent them to Srinagar with Amir Din, the Charas peon, on 7 ponies.

The year was early June 1947. The British were preparing to leave, India.

The Second Great Game as played over the 5 great passes via Leh, resulting in many decades of beneficial trade was also coming to a close.

4

Kesar's Address to His Arrow

A glimpse of the Tibetan Epic—Ladakhi Version.

On January, 12, 1976, I went to Sabu to attend the Losar Party of the Palejoras. We were about 25 guests. As it was going to be an all-night-party, some of us thought it would be a good idea to pass the long winter night more pleasantly, if somebody could tell a portion from the Kesar Epic, as used to be done sometimes, in olden days. We found out, there was one Rinchen Namgyal, among the guests who could do so. At first, he turned down all our requests. "I am out of practice for so many years, I am not in a mood," said he. But his friends knew how to put him in proper mood—a few bowls of 'Nan-Chhang', one after the other and he began with Kesar's address to his favourite and efficient arrow, Serda-Yuron, in a song.

But first a summary of the events leading upto it. (I liked this song—it was like a great general's speech to his troops on the eve of a crucial battle. Next morning, I went to the story teller's house to note down the details).

King Gyalam Kesar had left his kingdom, Ling, with his horse, Thuru Skyang-Jung, to kill giant Churu-Lungtung, one of his major enemies.

The Giant was away on one of his killing expeditions, and when Kesar arrived in his palace, he found his lovely wife alone. She fell in love with Kesar. So much the better for him, as without her help, it was impossible to kill the Giant who had as many as nine lives.

So, they had a happy time, and when the time for the Giant's return approached, the queen dug a ditch, 18 storeys deep, and hid Kesar and his horse in it. Filling the ditch with earth, she placed a huge pot on three stones, refilled the ditch,

and lit a fire to make tea for the Giant; she herself started bellowing on the fire with a goat-skin bellow.

The Giant landed, making a thunderous noise which shook the earth. Sniffing the air, he remarked, "What an appitizing smell of a man and a horse !" "What ideas you have sometimes," replied the queen, "you are carrying a human corpse in the right side of your mouth, and that of a horse in the left, and yet you say, 'I smell a human being and a horse. I am fed up with such things, my lord" "Don't be annoyed, my queen", said the Giant, "I admit my mistake. Now, pray tell me whether I should sleep the intermittent sleep of a cock, or what they call, the long sweet sleep of death, I am tired." "Since you ask my opinion," replied the queen, "I would suggest the latter, my lord. You have eaten your fill of both human and animal flesh. Ling has been reduced to ruins and nobody knows where Kesar is. So, you have nothing to fear. You are back in your own palace and what you need is a long and restful sleep." "You are right my lady," replied the Giant and yawning, he stretched himself on the floor to sleep the marathon sleep which literally proved to be his sleep of death.

The queen got Kesar and his horse dug up, and mounting on the chest of the snoring Giant, Kesar started cutting the nine lives, one by one, with his dagger and thus got rid of a powerful enemy.

The crafty queen mixed something in his drink which made Kesar forgetful of his past and then there followed a period of several years when everything about his Kingdom was wiped out of his memory.

The shrewd and beautiful queen knew how to keep the king in good humour with drink, dance and dice. When the two were having a lovely time, king Kurgyal of Hor-Land, taking advantage of Kesar's absence, invaded Ling and reduced it to ruins, and carried away, among other things, Kesar's beautiful wife, Schelchum Dugumo.

One day, when the King and the Queen were drinking and playing dice, in the castle, Kesar abruptly stopped and said,

"Hark, my swans from Ling ! Surely, something is the matter. Hurry Queen, hurry, and bring a pair of phingpas—a white and a black one. If it is good news, they will alight on the white, and if bad, then on the black." Slowly circling over the castle, the pair of swans landed on the black phingpa and Kesar hurriedly untied the letter from the neck of one of the swans and read it. For a short while he remained dumfounded at the magnitude of the disaster and his own carelessness.

Regaining his poise, he acted quickly and kicking the enchanting queen and even his son, whom she bore for him, set out, to avenge the destruction of his kingdom and abduction of his wife. But as stated earlier, before, himself, proceeding he wanted to send his efficient arrow, Ser-da Yuron, on a reconnaisance flight, to Hor-Land. (And Rinchen Namgyal, thus started singing).

"There are three thousand and five hundred arrows in my right quiver;
There are three thousand and five hundred arrows in my left quiver;
Among them there are one thousand who are eager to go on this mission;
And there are one hundred who are unwilling.
But those who are willing, I won't send them,
And those who are unwilling, dare not refuse me.
But I have chosen my Sarda Yuron, and none other will go,
My Youron's upper body is made of yellow gold,
And it can set eighteen valleys of Hor-Land on fire.
My golden Yuron's lower body is made of turquoise,
And it can flood eighteen valleys of Hor-Land.
One of its tail feather is made from the quill of a white vulture,
It causes a thunderous Dirra,
The second is made from eagel's feather,
And makes a hissing Urra,
And the third one is made of Owl's feather,
And you my Arrow, if you show no arrow-skill,

I will break you into two, and make you a Yokrus for poking fire,
And you my shoulder if you have no shoulder-skill,
I will cut you into pieces and make a meat curry,
And my thumb and fingers, if you have no finger-skill,
I will chop you into pieces and make me a minced-meat dish.
Golden Yuron, you have to bring me a piece of flesh from Dugumo's breast,
A piece of fat from Kurgyal's heart,
And a little brain from the skull of Shey-Srug-O-La-Tar.
If you succeed in your mission, I will amply reward you,
And mind, failure means ignoble death."

So saying he pulled the bow-string to its limit, and sent Ser-da-Yuron darting into the air. And it flew on and on, setting on fire eighteen Hor-Land Valleys and devastating another eighteen by flooding them.

When the Arrow arrived in the capital city of Hor-Land, King Kurgyal was holding a grand reception in the 99-pillared grand hall of his palace, He was sitting on a throne of solid gold, and queen Dugomo was sitting next to him on a throne of deep blue turquoise and their little son, Shay-Srug Ola Tar was seated on a smaller throne of snow-white conch shell.

On the floor, on the right hand side (Yas dal) were seated, one hundred high-ranking Nang-pa nobles[4] and courtiers, headed by such famous heroes as Tsera-Thunga[5], Jigshed Lonpo and Shang-Jung-Maru, and on the left hand side (Yondal) were seated one hundred Chhipa nobles, and courtiers.

When golden Yuron arrived in the hall, it found no place to alight. So it kept on circling the central sandal wood pillar and dividing it with a look, into 3 equal parts—3 steps distance from above, three in the middle, and three from below, it pierced the wood in the centre of the midd'e one, and alighted there. As soon as it did so, King Kurgyal began to

have torturing pain, as one of his lives resided in the centre of the pillar.

There was commotion in the court room and all the courtiers were on their feet. Many, including the heroes, tried to pull the arrow out, but none could do it. Therefore, one hundred black-smiths with big hammers, one hundred boy-blacksmiths with small hammers, and one hundred blacksmiths' wives with goat skin bellows, were summoned to the palace to extract the arrow, but however hard they tried, the arrow did not budge. By striking the arrow with their hammers, they only increased the pangs of the king. As a last resort, they decided to set the pillar on fire and the arrow with it. Therefore, a huge amount of charcoal was piled up round the pillar and the hundred blacksmiths' wives began to work furiously at their bellows to blow the fire red-hot. The upper and the lower portions of the pillar caught fire but the three-step length of the middle portion remained in tact, however hard the ladies tried.

In the meantime, queen Dugumo fell into a pensive mood and deep thoughts. She knew Kesar was on the move, and her days in Horland were numbered. She fell sorry for King Kurgyal, and more so for Shay-Srug-Ola-Tar, their only son. She knew Kesar would never spare them. And what would be her own fate ?

By this time, King Kurgyal realized that it was no ordinary arrow, it must have come from Kesar and only Dugumo could prevail upon it, to come out of the Sandal-wood pillar.

And thus, he addressed Dugumo, "You, O, Dugumo, you are a Lhamo[6] from Stangla, a Lhumo[7] from Yok-Lu, a Khandoma[8] from Gyagar (India). You are as beautiful as an Utampala flower, and as bright as the full moon on the 15th day[9]. You are as compassionate as Dolma Karmo (White Tara). Do something to extract the arrow". And Dugumo rose from her throne.

She ordered a measure filled with barley grain to be brought to her. She also ordered a young man (whose

parents were alive)[10] to carry Phoks in a incense burner, and a young woman (whose parents were alive) to carry Kalchor in a Chhang pot filled with fresh chhang and herself carrying a silken Khatak (white scarf) in her hand, they ceremoniously proceeded towards the central pillar.

When the arrow, saw Dugumo, the former wife of King Kesar approaching, it got unnerved and could offer no resistance.

Taking a tiny piece of butter from the edge of the Chhang pot and applying it on the top of the arrow, Dugumu gently pulled it out with her right hand. She then tied the Khatak in a special knot over the feathers of the arrow and putting it into the barley-filled measure, ordered it to be carried to the royal chapal of King Kurgyal on the palace roof.

FOOTNOTES

(1) Extra strong Chhang (beer) served in copper bowls, at intervals during a feast.

(2) Felt covering for floors, called Namdah nowadays.

(3) Stod-Khog=Upper body, Mad-Khog=Lower body. Khogpa means body of a living being. "Upper—part is not used, but upper-body, as if the arrow were a living thing.

(4) Ladakhis and Tibetans sit on the floor on rugs and carpets in rows. The right hand row (Yas-dal) has a slightly higher 'status' than the left (Yon-dal). We are very particular where we sit and who sits above us, in the row. And quarrels in this respect are not infrequent.

(5) Nang-pa literally means 'insider' and Chhipa, 'outsiders'. At present the Buddhists are the Nangpas, and Muslims and Christians and other Non-Buddhists are the Chipas. But as Kesar's Epic pertains to very ancient times, Nangpas would be those belonging to the State religion which would be the religion of the majority. But it is worthy to note that the relations between the

two, even in those days were as cordial as at present, and that Chipas were equally represented in administration and the royal court. The only distinction was that of Yas-dal and Yon-dal.

(6) A goddess of the region above the earth.

(7) A goddess of the under-water region of the Nagas.

(8) A heroine.

(9) Tibetans and Ladakhis reckon Lunar months of 30 days. Hence we have the full moon on the 15th day.

(10) Strictly speaking, it would be an inauspicious sign even if one of the parent of the girl carrying the Kalchor, is dead.

5

Impact of Modern Age and Tourism on Ladakh

The question many people ask is whether modern ways and foreign tourists would not have a negative impact on Ladakhi way of life and culture. Some tourists themselves are genuinely concerned about it. There is no doubt that money corrupts in many ways both glaring and subtle. On the other hand, tourism and modern age have brought about some good things. Every change or a movement has its good as well as bad effects. It can not be an unmixed blessing. Were it so, it would lose much of its charm. Good and bad must co-exist.

I think, it is better to stress the good things in an individual or a ccommunity than to point out the mistakes. Therefore, I would deal briefly with some of the good things.

1. The most important thing that the Ladakhis have come to realise is that they have a great cultural heritage and a beautiful way of living of which they can be justly proud of.

People appreciate our way of living—how we receive a guest ; how we serve and drink tea and Chang (local bear) ; how we sing while carrying a load, laying a brick, reaping the crop, driving the animals round and round on the threshing floor, how we whistle and sing while winnowing; how we sing a song of praise to the pair of Zos while ploughing the fields; how a Buddhist bride-groom party dress, dance and sing while neighbours irrespective of their religion wait long hours to wish them well, with bowls of milk and pots of Chang; our kitchens and the bright rows of pots and pans, the iron stove and the goat-skin-bellow, and the Churn to make our butter tea, our polite manners and etiquette, and above all, the harmonious relations between the different religious communities—live and let others live.

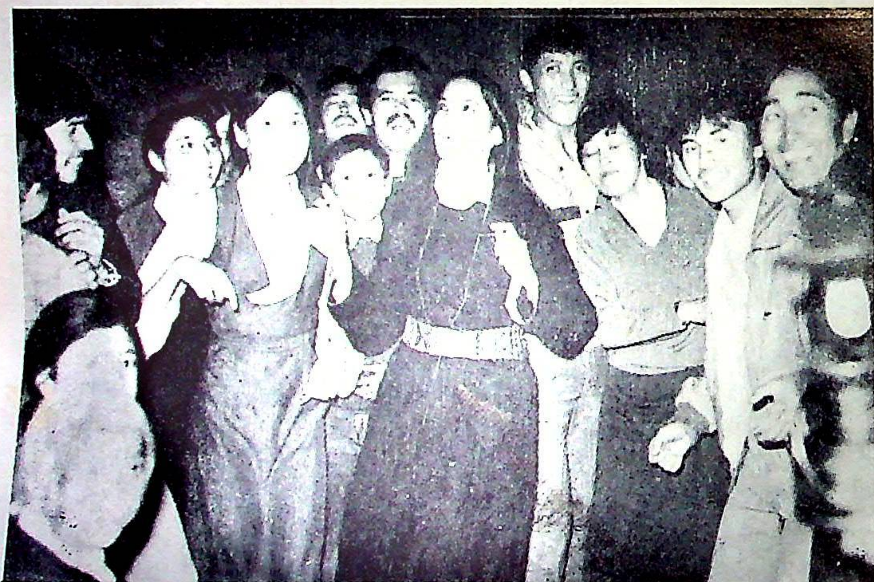


Leader of the Groom's party holding the Dadar (arrow with scraf tied in a special knot). Shabana Azmi and others receiving the party with scarfs.

Shabana Azmi being interviewed at Leh Radio Station.



(From right) Mrs. S. Kapoor, Shabana Azmi, a relative and the bride wearing Pairak—the traditional head-dress.



Shabana Azmi dancing with some Ladakhi youth to the tune of Western music.

The treasures in the gonpas beside their religious significance to the followers of Budhism, are of great artistic value, and they are not only taking better care of them now but new additions of statues, Thankas, Manis and Chortens are being got done by talented artists, on traditional lines. The huge Thanka in the Phiang monastery; the stucco statue of Jig-jet in the Spituk gonpa; and the seated Buddha in the Thiksay Gonpa are some new additions. The two new statues were done by an artist from Tingmosgang who I think, is the most talented man in this art. I understand at present, he is working on a statue of Padma Sambhava, in the Hemis monastery. Another big Thanka got done by the inhabitants of Skara village near Leh by the painter-master from Nemo who works in the Handicraft school Leh; a second Thanka for which he won the National Academy Award are other wonderful new additions that I know of. I think, they are as finely executed on traditional lines as by any old artist. (A Picasso is not less valuable than those done by old masters in the eyes of art lovers).

And under the impact of foreign tourists the silver smiths Chiling are producing more finely executed silver cups and tea pots for the decoration of our Drawing rooms, as well as for the tourists.

In this way, I see a revival and enthusiasm in the gonpas and among many lay devotees.

I know very little about the annual festival of the gonpas and the mask dances, the deities in the chapels and their symbolic gestures; the colour symbols of the scroll and wall paintings; the significance of Mandalas and Mantras; the prayers and pujas connected with Death; the philosophy of birth and rebirth; meditation and mysticism; the Kangur and Tangur and other literatures. These and many other things of Tibetan Buddhism are fascinating studies for researchers and scholars. Indeed a good deal has already been written about them.

The other facets of Ladakhi culture—its music and dance ; customs and traditions connected with a Buddhist wedding,

celebrations in connection with the birth of a child or the Ladakhi New Year, and seasonal festivals are different from those of the Tibetans and therefore, I think, many of them are rooted in pre-Buddhist times. Influenced by other cultures, significantly by Balti and Dard, over the centuries, a unique Ladakhi culture has been evolved. These aspects are also interesting to study and investigate and write for Ladakhi and foreign scholars.

From times immemorial Ladakh has been a meeting place of routes to Tibet in the east, Central Asia in the north, Baltistan in the West and Kashmir and Panjab in the south. Although surrounded by high mountain passes, traders and pilgrims have been coming and going to these places. Prior to 1947, from Leh, it took them half a month to reach Skardo (in Baltistan) and Srinagar, one month to Yarkand, and three months to Lhasa.

2. Opening of the Radio Station at Leh in 1971 is having another strong beneficial impact, on our culture and language, particularly the colloquial, and music, both vocal and instrumental. It provides a forum for Ladakhi performing artists, writers, poets, plawrights story tellers, both young and old. Their songs and messages are carried to the remotest village in the nook of a mountain to a lonely shepherd or to an old blind man to gladen their heart. While a beautiful face is brought to better focus by a stage light, a sweet voice or even a sigh is more expressive when sung and heaved in the studio, on the microphone, and heard on the transistor radio. Modern techniques and training methods in many fields of human activity are bringing out the best in man. We cannot ignore them.

The artists of the Radio Station—particularly the two Surna players, the flute and the Ladakhi guitar players, the versatile singer, playwright and radio actor from Wanla with his other friends, not only do well in the studio, but outside as well. While performing in the studio they delight the ears, when they appear on the stage, once in a while, they delight the eyes. As a result of modern technology, such as the loud speaker,

the radio, the electric light and stage facilities, more and more colourful music and dances are being added by talented and imaginative artists, of the Leh Radio Station and the Cultural Academy. Though Ladakhi music and dance are basically meant for open air, yet on the stage, with modern cosmetics and colourful costumes, the artists can give a better show and the audience can watch and hear them in a better way.

Two or three years back I accompanied an Englishman to watch a variety show of Ladakhi music and dances arranged by the Radio Station Leh, in the auditorium. When it was over, I asked him how he liked it, and he said, "It was wonderful." "Was'nt two hours boring for you," I asked him further. "I wish it had lasted longer," he replied. Many foreigners appreciate our dances and songs although in matters of music and food we like our own to which we are accustomed from our childhood.

But for the Radio Station, I would not have heard a beautiful ancient song sung by a good singer from a remote village. I saw the Koshen dance and what we call the Chhang-pot dance for the first time on the stage, in the auditorium. Old folk songs can now be recorded and preserved for posterity. There are dramatic clubs in many villages and the Cultural Academy arranges annual competitions of plays and dramas and encourages them by giving prizes, and meeting a part of their expenses. And Ladakhi poets meet in the studio of the Radio Station to recite their poems.

3. As I have said a revival is taking place and many items of dress and jewellery which had gone out of fashion are now staging a come back. At least, artists and enthusiasts keep them and wear them on ceremonial occasions, Lokpa—the goat-skin back-wear of the ladies which had almost totally gone out of fashion from Leh is now worn on the stage when giving a performance.

4. Opening of the Palace Museum at Stok, is another boon resulting from tourism, not only for the foreigners but to Ladakhis as well. I could never have seen the royal jewellery

of ancient kings and queens of Ladakh and other articles used by royalty, had they not been exhibited in the glass cases of the museum. They would have remained stored in the strong boxes in the Palace with risk of damage by insects. Now they are arranged systematically in glass cases to be admired by all.

I am glad to understand that talks are in progress between the queen and the authorities in New Delhi to hand over the palace in Leh to be restored by the Archaeological Department. The sooner it is done the better for the 350 years old grand palace of Singe Namgyal, the greatest King of Ladakh is in urgent need of repairs on a big scale. A part of the nine storeyed palace facing west, collapsed on 26th September 1947. The second part facing the bazar collapsed after a decade or so. And the wall and windows of the eastern part of the palace are in bad shape for want of repairs.

Leh without its palace is unthinkable. I could not think of a appropriate phrase to describe how it would look like without its palace. It dominates Leh from all sides.

It would gladen the hearts of all of us to see it restored, and the descendents of singe Namgyal the most. So, I would request the queen at Stok and the concerned authorities in New Delhi to arrive at an early settlement in this regard. There can be no two opinions regarding the restoration of the Leh Palace and also of Shey Palace which is in worse shape.

5. Lastly, quite a number of Ladakhis have toured many countries of Europe, Japan and America. These visits have been sponsored by friends and organisations abroad. This is another good thing resulting from tourism. Rev. S. Razu, my youngest daughter Tadzin and myself were also lucky in this regard and were able to visit Germany, England, Switzerland and France for two summer months in 1980. Tadzin's tour was sponsored by Mr. J. Cornu of Geneva and ours by a common friend, Mr. W. Radsheit of Bonn, The Moravian Mission Board London, sponsored our visit to England from Europe, through Rev. F. Linyard.

Our hosts in all these four countries were generous in their

hospitality and took pains to make our stay comfortable and our tour worth while. We cherish happy memories of the people and the places we saw in those countries.

Money Corrupts in subtle ways. If you can control it, it is a good servant, if you allow it to control you, it is a bad master. It would indeed be a tragic thing if we lose our values and change our way of life in a drastic way, in persuit of money. Of particular concern is the drain of works of art and religious objects. I have to offer only two suggestions. Small objects such as bronze statuettes should be kept in glass cases to guard against temptations to steal. Mona Lisa in Paris is kept in a glass case. Secondly, renovation works in Gonpas such as Alchi or Shey or any other monastery should be done under the supervision of specialists. I think, an Italian specialist would do such a thing better because their country is full of works of art.

But at the same time, it would not be practicable to remain in isolation and have no contact with the modern world, even if such a thing were possible. That would not be realistic. We cannot remain shut in our Shangrila.

Who would deny himself the benefits of electric light, the thermosflask and the pressure-cooker, particularly in a cold place like Ladakh situated on high altitude? Who would travel to Srinagar on horseback or on foot (unless you are trekking or on a research work) when the aeroplane can carry you in half an hour, provided you can afford it.

But Ladakhis have a knack for adapting and adopting modern things and ways to suit their covenience. To illustrate, being a very cold place the benefits of tapping solar heat is undeniable. Therefore, while constructing a house they make big windows with glass panes to get the maximum amount of solar heat, at the same time they maintain the outward features of Ladakhi architecture. Double glazing one room at least, for the intense cold nights of winter would soon follow, I think,

In my opinion, Ladakhis are taking the challanges of the times fairly easily. Football and cricket tournaments are arranged, played and enthusiastically watched. Polo is still played in the traditional way but with modern polo sticks and balls and a referee on horse back. In Ice Hockey, the Ladakhi team is doing very well and, I think in a few years it would be the All India Champion.

A Ladakhi has been awarded the Padma Shri ; two have scaled the Everest; a Ladakhi Lt. Colonel has won the Mahavir Chakra twice ; and two Ladakhis have been awarded the National Academy Awards, one for Thanka Painting and the other for Stucco sculpturing.

Along with traditional cushions, rugs and folding tables, the Drawing room of a well-to-do Ladakhi has sofa-sets as well. Almost every house in Leh has a transistor radio, many have cassette record player, some have Video sets and with the opening of the 120th transmitting station in September, 1984, Ladakh has entered the TV age.

There is an hour of western music broadcast every Saturday night and the selection of records and the announcements are made by Ladakhi youth of both sex.

The Film Director Shekhar Kapoor alongwith his wife was in Leh for the shooting of Joshile in August this year (84). Shabana Azmi, a top ranking film star also came to Leh for a visit. There was a Ladakhi wedding and some of the girls went to the hotel where they were staying to invite them. They accepted, the invitation and came in Ladakhi dress, with white scarfs to welcome the groom's party in the traditional way. As usual the groom's party arrived late and the girls played some Western music and started dancing on the cemented courtyard down below, in the moonlight. And Shabana Azami also joined them as the picture shows.

Remaining within the broad framework of Ladakhi culture, we have to adapt and incorporate the new changes of the modern times.

I am not a social analyst or a futurist. I leave these things to wiser people than myself.

Before describing what we can learn from the foreign tourists, I must tell you how 'The Joldan Guest House' came into existence. Many of the Ladakhis themselves were taken by surprise when Ladakh was thrown open to foreign tourists in 1974. Those who had a furnished house, earned a lot of money and what I might term as tourists Fever gripped many people in Leh, including myself. In early 1976 Angdu a family friend came to my house and we talked about the flourishing tourist business, over a cup of tea. He said his friend Norboo Spurka had received a letter from ARTOU in Switzerland to reserve a small house in Leh for their groups. They were willing to pay 20,000/- rupees for 3 months for the house and payment for food would be saparate. Spurka'was about to write back expressing his inability to find a suitable furnished house. I said I have the house and Spurka has the letter of contract but where to get the money from for furnishing the house and for other initial expenses. He told me not to worry on that score. He could arrange a loan. So Angdu and the members of Joldan family started hectic preparations—listing items of furniture, the number of kitchen and table-wares etc. My eldest daughter Elza flew to Chandigarh to get the furniture and other things. In those days a limited number of civilian passengers were carried in army planes. I wrote a letter to a relative at Dehradun to send a good cook, and John Perumal reached Leh by road before the tourist season commenced. We were ready to receive the first group. Attending to the menu of 8—12 tourists in a group, three times a day, is quite a job, which kept us all busy. When the season was over, after paying the loan back Angdu and I divided the profit. Next year they hired performing artists to give the guests an idea of Ladakhi dance and music and I gave the commentary on the various dances, beginning—"In Ladakh every thing must be done in the right way ; a wedding must take place on the correct date and the dead must be cremated on the right day. In the same way, a social function must begin correctly with a Lharna in honour of the Lhas and Lhamos ; they must be kept in good humour for the peace and prosperity of the land. So we would start today's function with a Lharna..............

From the scores of letters and photos, we received, every year till 1980, I can safely say that they enjoyed their stay in Ladakh. ARTOU now, hiras a bigger hotel and we are content to run our Guest House for individual tourists. This is the story of Joldan Guest House.

Now something about the other side, namely some of the good qualities in the foreign tourists. We can learn some good things from them. Their dedication for work and the pains they take to ascertain a detail while on a research project, are admirable. Also, their love of Nature, and Trekking and mountaineering ; many of their habits and manners—mostly they would say, "Is it possible to get a jug of water" ?

They leave their room nearly as clean as when they occupied it, several days back. If the waste paper container you have placed in the room is full, they would put their waste into plastic bags ; they would not bang open or slam shut the door so that others may not get disturbed ; they would, as matter of habit, switch off the light of their room when coming to the dining hall ; they would never keep the water tap in the bath room running. It was a hot day in July and a tourist staying in our Guest House, came to me to say that he wanted to have a shower but there was no water. I said I was sorry for that but he would have to wait till the boy got the can of water from the water point, in the street, and pour it into the barrel on the roof top. I explained that we do not get running water from underground .pipes. He understood the situation and the next day, I found a notice, in French on the bath room wall, asking others to be economical in the use of water.

I am never tired of telling or rather lecturing about the economical use of water or electric power or disposal of waste. I do it in Leh, as well as in Srinagar. Critics would say that there is no lack of articles in school text books, and newspapers, and talks on the radio about hygiene and sanitation. Yet I see many of us do not act on them. In Srinagar if you keep your water taps running many would argue that it costs them nothing or very little. We have to

remember that if we get it free and in abundance, in several orher parts of the city people have to get it in buckets from the street taps. If we throw our left-over food or even boiled tea leaves down the kitchen sink or the toilet, one day the pipe may get blocked and you may have to pay to get a skilled man. Even if such a thing does not happen, the septic tank below would overflow, and I need hardly say that stagnant water bread many kinds of creeping creatures and mosquitoes, in summer, and give out a bed smell. There is no dearth of old newspapers and plastic bags these days. We can put the rubbish and throw them into the dust bin outside. It would make the work of the man easier who cleans them. Somebody has to do the dirty work. Why not to make his work a bit easier? In Germany dust bins with big plastic bags inside and overlapping, are kept and the man who clears them, puts on rubber gloves and pulls out the plastic bags to put them into the waiting van. With population exploding, standard of living rising, and more and more people desiring modern facilities, and on the other hand natural resources getting scarcer, some restraints and self-discipline and small sacrifices by everybody is need for the common good.

I am not writing to criticize anybody. I have received my education in Srinagar and stayed here for ten years. I love Kashmir. I am writing these ordinary things with the best of intentions and with the earnest wish that per chance it may help somebody. Therefore, please bear with me for a few things more. As I go out on my lonely walks. I see many new houses being built in Mahjoor Nagar and other parts. Good-buildings but poor sanitation. We prefer our toilet outside the house. Good. I would advise prospective builders to make a little more provision while making the estimate, for an Indian type of porcelain toilet and a septic tank. You need not have a 12·5 litre tanky to flush out. A tub, or two buckets filled with water and a long handled wooden brush would do. It would give you good dividends in health and hygiene.

I dislike poplar trees. In summer I feel sort of suffocated,

in a house, surrounded by poplar trees. It blocks the view. The view even of the high snow-capped mountains and lakes for which Kashmir is famous. We name our hotels Lake View or Mountain View but deny ourselves these views by planting high poplar trees. It blocks the sunshine which is badly needed in a cold country. There is no doubt that they are a source of income to you. But even rich people plant these trees round their compound. There is no need here for wind breakers. They are even a health hazard, when the white flakes in early summer dance about every-where, particularly for those having asthama, bronchatis and sinus.

I would not like planting fruit trees either—they would tempt the boys of the neighbourhood to throw stones at the fruits, and may lead to quarrel among the parents, nor would I attempt to grow a kitchen garden. These things are now out of date. Leave them to experts in the countryside. One or two small types of trees for shade, in summer, and a small lawn with flower beds would be beautiful for rich people. It will also provide a hobby for them. Have you seen the Dutch tulips and the blooming peaches flowering together in some gardens of Srinagar in spring ?

A rust-proof corrogated iron sheet must be cheaply produced, and made available for our long-sliding roofs. Have a look around and you will find many roofs of corrogated sheets in different stages of decay and rust. It spoils the look and show of the building. Painting them would be costly. It is a challenge to Indian Industry and the Government authorities. What about other synthetic corrogated roofing materials ? These should be given a trial here.

I was glad to see the central heating system in the Lal Ded Hospital but not the blare of the loud-speaker. Patients require a quiet atmosphere.

The Government allot plots of land to its employees and others, for building a house of their own. But even if you have the money, by the time the house is complete you would look older by a year or two. Construction of a house and

getting electricity and water connection are not easy things. Then the up-keep. For middle-class people, three or four storeyed flats would be a better thing. It should be a joint project between the Government, a Private financial corporation and the would-be flat-owners. Full ownership rights should be given after a long period of time, say twenty years when the client clears the last annual contribution. Experts know better than I. I need hardly point out the advantages. Expenses on water, electricity sanitation and garage facilities, ward and watch and repairs would be efficient and cheaper as they would be jointly shared by all the flat owners. Security would be the greatest advantage. It can also help promoting national integration. With more affluency, high-rise buildings with lifts and more sophisticated facilities can be constructed.

I have given a lot of advice ; but I was a teacher for 30 years.

I was dwelling on some of the good qualities in foreign tourists. They are pragmatic. If they feel pity for a poor or a disabled boy, they would arrange a sponsorship for his education. Many of them would bring bagfuls of old clothes for the poor.

When Martha, my second daughter, told a French lady who was staying in our Guest House in October, 1979 that her mother Kunga, and I would be going to see the Dussehra Festival in Kulu, she gave me seven hundred rupees to distribute among poor people. And I distributed one to fifty rupees to people who I thought deserving. Several were surprised, but they did not know that I was being generous with somebody else's money.

I was travelling alone by train from Geneva to Munich in August, 1980, in my Ladakhi dress. At a railway station a young lady boarded the train and took the seat next to me. It was lunch time and I took out the lunch of sandwiches from the plastic case, packed by my friends in St. Jullian. I asked the lady whether she would have one. She said, "I

have enough of my own." I explained that in Ladakh, we offer even to strangers, when we eat something. She spoke good English and said that she was a nurse and was earning quite a good salary. "Are there many poor people in India ?" she asked. "Yes," I said. On an impulse, she took out her purse and gave me a bank note of 100 Dauche Mark to distribute to the poor. I took down her address and said that I would inform her how I spent her money, on reaching back in India. In Srinagar, I went to the State Bank of India and showing my pass-port, got about 400 rupees in exchange. I distributed the money among some deserving people and wrote a letter to the German lady.